

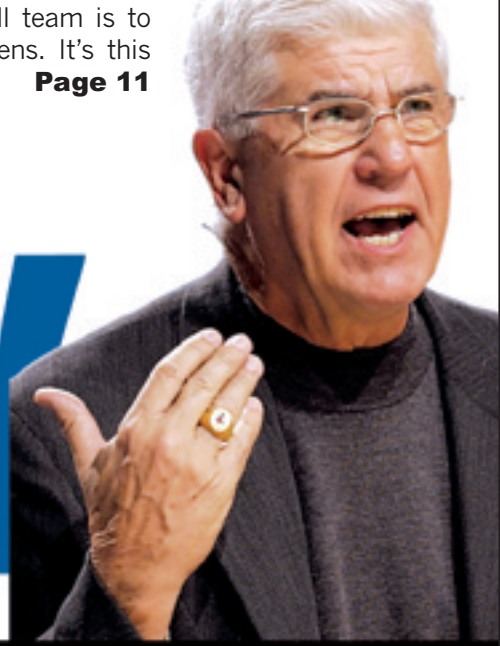
In many homes, calendars and posters of pretty girls have replaced images of door guardians and the Kitchen God.
Page 10



The old city looks like a small piece of Germany grafted onto the hills overlooking the Yellow Sea. **Page 16**



The goal of the Chinese basketball team is to finish among the top eight in Athens. It's this man's job to see that they do. **Page 11**



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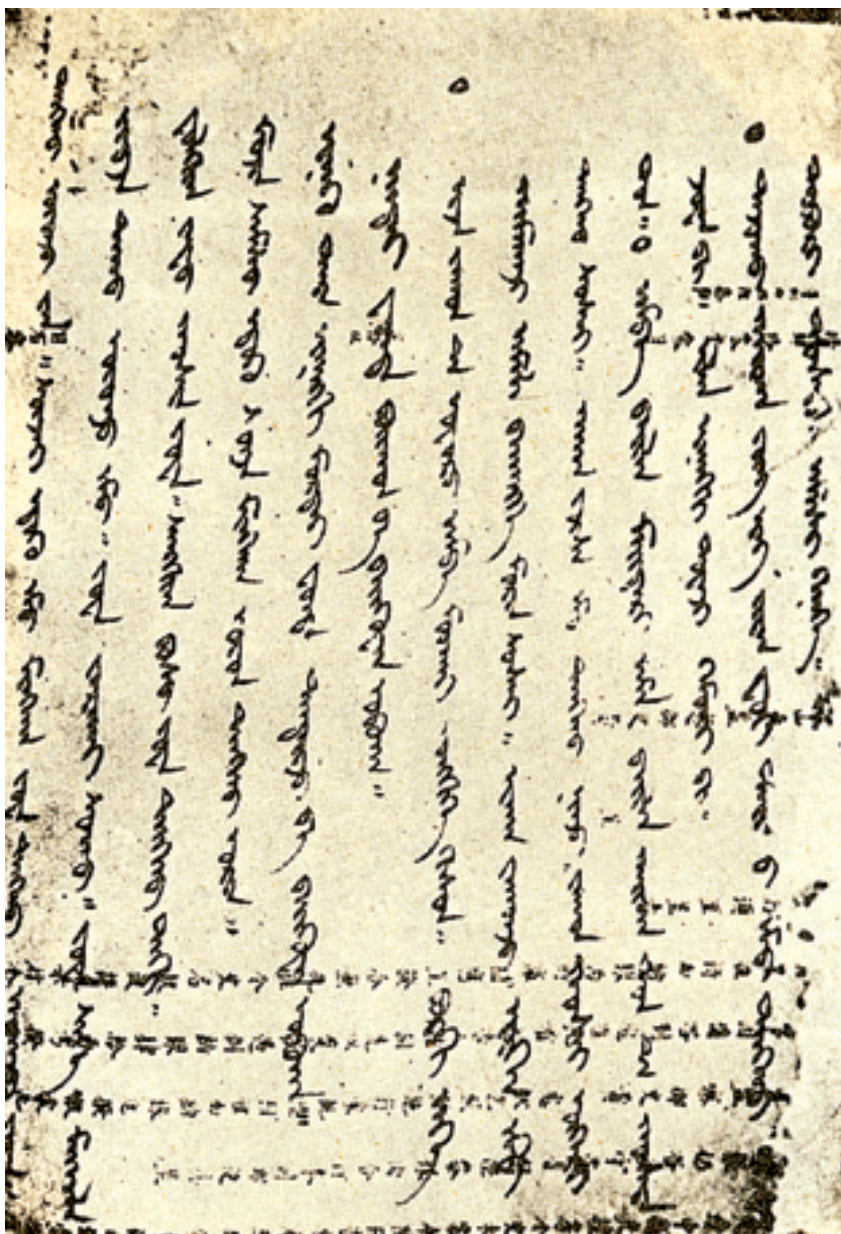
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Languages under Threat

'Languages are at the heart of humanity's intangible heritage. They are born, they evolve and, sometimes, they die. Yet, it behoves us to do all in our power to safeguard them so as to preserve the world's invaluable cultural diversity.' – Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-general



A document written in Manchu script. Today there are few people still living who can read the language.

By Hou Mingxin

According to the *Atlas of the World Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, there are about 6,000 languages spoken in the world today. Ninety five percent of these languages are spoken by only four percent of the total population, half of today's languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers and a quarter have fewer than 1,000. On average, two languages become "extinct" every month.

In order to recognize the world's linguistic diversity and to promote the practice of mother tongue languages, in 2000, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 International Mother Language Day in 2000.

3,000 languages under threat

According to the Atlas, over the past three centuries, languages have died out and disappeared at a dramatic and steadily increasing pace, especially in the Americas and Australia. At least 3,000 tongues are endangered, seriously endangered or dying in many parts of the world.

The Atlas says that experts generally consider a community's language to be "endangered" when at least 30 percent of the speaking community's children no longer learn it.

About 50 European languages are in danger. Some, like certain Saami (Lappish) tongues, spoken in Scandinavia and northern Russia, are regarded as seriously endangered, or moribund.

The Pacific region is home to more than 2,000 living languages, a third of the world's total. The Atlas says the region's languages are

generally alive and well, however Australia and New Caledonia constitute two crisis areas.

In Africa, the Atlas says that out of the 1,400 or so local languages, between 500 and 600 are on the decline, and 250 are under immediate threat of disappearing.

In North America, very few Inuit Eskimo languages in the Arctic have survived the pressure from English and French.

In Asia, the situation is uncertain in many parts of China. The Atlas says the pressure from Chinese is especially strong in the northeast and northwest, and the far south province of Yunnan.

China's situation

"There are about 120 languages in China, half of them are in a status of declining, and over 40 are in danger," said Professor Xu Shixuan from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in an interview with *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

According to Xu, nowadays only about one percent of the 8 million Tujia people can speak their language, while for Manchu, the official language of the Qing Dynasty, there are only around 50 people who can speak it, and a further 100 or so who can understand but not speak it.

In a report published in *China Youth Daily* Sunday, Fang Tie, a professor for Yunnan University said that Jinuo language is declining, and that the minority nationality has stopped bilingual education. The report said that the language would disappear within 20 years if no measures are taken to save it.

Six-party Talks Enter Pivotal Phase

Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan said Thursday that the on-going six-party talks had entered a pivotal phase of discussing the abolition of nuclear programs, safeguarding security and enhancing economic cooperation.

Tang made the remarks while meeting with delegation heads and diplomatic envoys in Beijing, saying China was glad that the second round talks had started well.

He said all sides attached great significance to the talks, and had been fully prepared. They also hoped the talks would yield good results.

Tang expressed the hope that all sides would show mutual respect, exercise maximum flexibility and explore feasible solutions.

The Korean Peninsula was the only area of the world that remained under the shadow of the Cold War, Tang said, noting the nuclear issue had posed serious challenges to regional peace and development.

"However, if we can take resolving the nuclear question as an opportunity to gradually narrow disparities, expand consensus and build

mutual trust, we will likely turn the challenges into opportunities and bring benefits to all sides, and create a more peaceful and secure regional environment."

China had always maintained that the Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free, while the rational security concerns of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should also be resolved, so it would have a normal development environment and there could be lasting peace and stability in northeast Asia, he said.

Heads of the delegations to the six-party talks said the talks were constructive, and had provided unprecedented opportunities for a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue. They pledged further efforts toward the final resolution of the issue.

The participating sides – the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States, the Republic of Korea, Russia and Japan – thanked the Chinese side for the thoughtful arrangements, and expressed appreciation for the active role of coordination China had played in the talks.

(Xinhua)



Heads of the delegations to the six-party talks shake hands in Beijing on Wednesday. From left to right, James Kelly, US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs; Lee Soo-Hyuck, ROK deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Kim Kye-gwan, DPRK Vice Foreign Minister; Wang Yi, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister; Mituji Yabunaka, director-general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Ministry and Russian Vice Foreign Minister Alexander Losiukov.

Xinhua Photo

"In 1993, when I came to Yunnan to investigate the Misu language, there were about 5,000 people almost totally isolated from the outside world. But when I returned in 2002, I found many people, especially children, could not speak Misu. In this period of ten years, the standard of living had risen considerably, a result of contact with neighboring people," Xu said.

She also pointed out that although small language communities are generally concerned about the loss of their languages and are reluctant to abandon their mother tongue, they also often feel that this loss is an inevitable consequence of economic globalization.

Colonization is another reason for some languages' decline and even disappearance.

According to the UNESCO Atlas, in the United States, for example, fewer than 150 Indian

languages have survived out of the several hundred that were spoken there before the arrival of the Europeans. All are endangered and many are moribund. Discrimination against these languages lessened in the 1970s, but the "backlash of conservatism and the strengthening of the 'English-only' policies in the 1980s has exacerbated the ongoing extinction of Amerindian languages."

Rescue mission

In the 1980s, the international community started to recognize the severe extent at which languages were disappearing and the importance of preserving them. At the 1993 World Language Congress in Canada, the issue became for the first time the subject of an international forum.

(Continued on page 2)

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: JIAN RONG
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Party Intensifies Fight against Corruption

By Zhang Bo

In a move to intensify the campaign against corruption, the Communist Party of China has promulgated its internal supervision regulations and regulations on disciplinary penalties, full texts of which were released last week

by Xinhua News Agency.

The regulations establish 10 punishment mechanisms for acts by Party members that violate political, personnel and financial regulations, including bribery, malfeasance and infringement of others' rights.

Those who seriously violate

socialist moral ethics, such as by having illicit lovers or participating in immoral activities will also be subject to penalties ranging from serious warnings and removal from Party posts to expulsion from the Party.

The Central Committee urged

Party members at all levels to strictly observe the regulations.

A random street survey conducted by Xinhua last Friday found that more than 80 percent of the interviewed believed the regulations would enhance efforts to fight corruption.

SOE Bankruptcy to Become Law-based

By Xiao Yingying

A conference in Beijing Tuesday made a series of decisions regarding the reform of state owned enterprises (SOEs). The conference, titled the National State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Working Conference, was organized by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC).

According to a report in *China Business Times* Wednesday, chairman of SASAC Li Rongrong said that over the next four years, the commission would move from a policy-based model to one based on law for SOE bankruptcy cases. Li said that the SASAC would cooperate with relevant departments in working out the overall and yearly implementation plans concerning the closing-down and bankruptcy of SOEs, and that local governments would also be required to set deliver implementa-

tion plans.

Li said that SASAC would continue supporting the old industrial bases in the northeast, central and western regions, as well as the military and coal industries. In the affluent provinces and municipalities in the east, closing-down and bankruptcy of SOEs would no longer be handled by way of policy; instead, they would be dealt with according to relevant laws and regulations.

The meeting decided that from this year, the SASAC would seek to set up boards of directors in certain solely funded SOEs, and then gradually adopt the practice to other large solely funded SOEs, a process which is expected to take no more than three years.

Li also revealed that the SASAC would conform to modern enterprise practices, regulate the rights and obligations of shareholders, supervisory boards and managers, establish a governance structure and bring into full play the role of boards of directors as decision-makers.

Huang Ju, vice premier of the State Council, said in a speech delivered during the meeting that the changes conformed with plans to speed up reform of the management system of state-owned assets and establish a new framework within three years so as to guarantee an increase in their value.

Supervision Procedure Decided by Vote in Anhui

A significant change was made in the way decisions are made at the recent 8th conference of the 10th Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in Anhui Province. Voting was used to determine which governmental departments and personnel should be placed under special supervision this year, instead of discussion.

"It is the first time for all the members of the standing committee to participate in the voting," an official from Anhui told *China Youth Daily* on Tuesday. He said the purpose of the act was to reflect the will of people and democracy in the procedure of supervision.

The provincial standing commit-

tee has the right to evaluate and supervise the work of provincial government departments and officials. Previously, decisions were made during the conference of the standing committee as to which units would be placed under special supervision. However this practice has in the past sometimes led to problems. For instance, sometimes the majority of members of the standing committee do not agree with decision as to which units be placed under supervision, which undermines the effectiveness and authority of the supervision task.

Making the decision based on a vote has particular advantages. It can more accurately reflect the current hot issues, so that departments under supervision can realize their responsibility more clearly and provide better service.

This year, the departments placed under supervision by vote were Anhui Province's Finance Department, Education Department and the Bureau of Quality and Technical Supervision.

"Investment companies were not allowed in the past to be involved in production or provide any products, including service products," explained an official of the ministry who declined to give his name, "Now, the situation is changing."

But many business people say the changes do not go far enough.

The quality criteria for investors are still high. The local partner is required to have registered assets of at least 100 million yuan, while joint investment company should have a registered capital of \$30 million.

Overseas investors have to prove a total asset of at least \$400 million, and an investment of \$10 million on the mainland.

"The requirements are still high," said Jin Bosheng, director for foreign investment studies at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, a think tank of the ministry of commerce, "But it's a good beginning."

By the end of 2003, there were over 300 overseas investment companies in China, 127 of which are located in Beijing.

Freedom of Information Regulation Introduced

By Zhang Zhan

Beijing is to issue a regulation to open 15 kinds of governmental information to the public, according to a report in *Beijing Youth Daily* last Saturday.

According to the regulation, stipulated government departments should make available

information including that related to the forecast, process and management of epidemic and disaster situations.

Private citizens, juridical persons and certain organizations will have specific rights in regard to applying for information from government departments free of charge, the report said.

The regulation also stipulates that government departments should actively release information via their websites, press conferences and media releases, and information hotlines.

The new regulation does not cover state and commercial secrets and personal information.

CBRC to Launch Risk Rating for Banks

By Zhang Bo

China's banking watchdog has launched the country's first risk-rating system targeting joint-stock commercial banks, in a move to tighten supervision and force the banks to improve competitiveness.

The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) said Monday that it could confine the business scope of, or even take over banks that received a "poor results" rating.

The rating would cover the banks' capital adequacy, asset safety, management, profits, liquidity and sensitivity to market risks, said a spokesman for the commission.

Under the new system, China's joint-stock commercial banks, of which there are cur-

rently 11, will be divided into five categories ranging from "sound" to "poor."

A spokesman for the commission said the rating, which would be conducted annually by the CBRC, would be an important criterion for considering a joint-stock bank's market access and the appointment of senior staff.

The CBRC also plans to hold frequent and wide-ranging spot checks for banks with low ratings, among other efforts, to urge them to upgrade, said the spokesman.

Analysts say the new rating system will push joint-stock commercial banks to enhance corporate governance and improve internal controls in a bid to grow stronger.

(Continued from page 1)

UNESCO, which encourages multilingualism, has celebrated International Mother Language Day since 2000. It is presently carrying out studies of groups of languages that are especially endangered, such as the languages of South Selkup in Siberia; the Austronesian tongues of Eastern Timor; the Lisa language in Thailand; and the Wanyi Aboriginal language in Australia, long thought to be extinct until two speakers of it were recently discovered. UNESCO also plans to set up a monitoring system that will warn when an endangered language is threatened with extinction.

According to Xu, investigation and research on languages under threat in China started in the mid 1990s. Xu's research team has been receiving financial support from governmental departments to study threatened languages and, if possible, save them from disappearing.

Xu said her research group has investigated over 21 of the 40 or so languages under threat in China, and she plans to study the rest in the near future.

According to some countries' experience, an endangered, moribund or even extinct language can be saved with a determined language policy. In Japan for example, only eight people spoke Ainu on the island of Hokkaido in

the late 1980s, but today it is being revived after years of ostracism and decline. An Ainu museum has been opened there and the language is again being taught to young people. Sometimes languages that have actually died out have been "raised from the dead," such as Cornish, in England, which became extinct in 1777 but has been revived in recent years, with nearly 1,000 people now speaking it as a second language.

"Bilingualism or multilingualism is the best solution for the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity in today's world," Xu said.

She said bilingual or multilingual speakers can view the world from two or more different perspectives, increasing their knowledge, broadening their vision, while appreciating their own traditional cultures.

Citing the Bai people as an example, Xu said most Bai people are bilingual. Besides speaking their mother language, they can also speak mandarin or other minority languages. In this way, Xu said, the Bai language can absorb some useful aspects and preserve itself.

UNESCO's Atlas points out that on the Indian subcontinent, where there is extensive and well-catalogued linguistic diversity, most languages have remained alive thanks to bilingual or multilingual government policies.

Public Security Review

Beijing's 110 emergency hotline received 11 percent more calls this week than the preceding week, and 140 criminal suspects have been apprehended following investigations.

Break-ins and auto thefts accounted for 78 percent of the reported crimes. Break-ins mostly occurred in Chaoyang, Haidian and Fengtai districts late at night and in the early mornings. Panjiayuan in Chaoyang, Sijiqing in Haidian and Shiliyuan in Fengtai were the most common places for auto thefts to occur.

Housebreaking has become a key target of police recently, in view of a marked rise in the report of such crimes. Shops selling tobacco and alcohol, and small groceries have been the major targets, with most robberies occurring at night and in the early mornings.

(Information from Beijing Public Security Bureau)

Green Light for GM Crop Imports

Foreign genetically altered crops can now enter China with the Ministry of Agriculture's official seal of approval.

On Monday, the ministry awarded its first batch of safety certificates to Monsanto for its genetically modified maize, soybeans and cotton used for processing purposes in China.

The move formalizes earlier interim agreements with trading partners that had been granted temporary certificates of permission to trade genetically modified crops. China issued the regulations in March 2002.

The ministry pledged to place the import of agricultural biotech products under "normal" administrative rules when related interim rules expire on April 20.

So far, the ministry has received 18 applications for certificates from five foreign

biotech crop developers, namely DuPont and Dow AgroSciences of the US, Bayer of Germany and Syngenta of Switzerland, and ministry sources say processing is underway for another 11 applications.

The certificates will be valid for three to five years.

With the safety certificates, exporters may apply to ship genetically modified agricultural products after their safety administration registration forms and safety measures assurance forms are endorsed by the ministry.

Importers will be responsible for applying for labeling of the products as modified. They should also submit information with regard to how their bio-engineered products are stored, processed and consumed, the ministry said.

(Xinhua)

China Suspends Import of Two Japanese Cars

China on Wednesday imposed a ban on the import of two types of Isuzu automobiles from Japan after detecting a flawed design in their steering system that may pose a safety hazard.

According to a circular issued jointly by the Chinese State Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine and State Regulatory Commission of Certification and Accreditation on Wednesday, the border inspection and quarantine bureau of south China's Guangdong Province has found that the steering systems of some of the Isuzu CXH50S and CXH50T automobiles fails to measure up

to safety requirements.

Further checks and analysis have confirmed that there are problems in the design of the two types of vehicles, the circular said.

In addition to imposing an import ban, the circular also ordered the quality inspection and quarantine departments across the country to stop handling these two types of Isuzu automobiles.

The circular also called for drivers of the two types of automobile to have them checked immediately, while urging the Japanese producers of the automobiles to take measures as soon as possible to fix the flaw.

(Xinhua)

Cultural Relics Bureau Begins Ordering of Auction Houses

By Iris Miao

Chinese auction houses will be required to obtain a special permit from the State Cultural Relics Bureau in order to handle antique auctions after April 30, according to a press release issued by the bureau Monday.

In order to be granted one of the new antique-auction permits, auction houses must meet certain criteria. Besides having 10 million yuan in registration capital, they should also have at least five employees with the highest professional qualifications, either researcher or professor, in their field.

Those firms lacking the required number of such employees may employ retired experts. However those retirees should meet the following standards: They must have

retired for more than one year; they should not be a member of the state, provincial or municipal cultural relics appraisal committee; they should not have any relationship with those artifacts going under the hammer; and they should not be employed by more than one auction house at any given time. Moreover, the auction houses should train their own experts and after January 1, 2007 hiring of retired experts will not be allowed.

Zhang Yuanjin, manager of Beijing Hanhai Auctions, told *Beijing Today* Monday that auction houses are busy preparing to meet the new requirements by April 10. Hanhai currently employs three researchers, the largest number of researchers employed by any of China's auction houses.

State Council Issues Water Diversion Statutes

By Zhang Zhan

The South-to-North Water Diversion Office under the State Council published a notice on its website last Friday on the compilation of laws, rules and regulations governing projects in China and overseas related to water-diversion projects. The move is aimed at drawing international experience in the area of long-distance water diversion projects.

The materials should be translated accurately into Chinese and attached with original documents, according to the notice.

Contributions that are adopted will attract remuneration, and all contributions will be listed on the website of the office (www.nsb.gov.cn). Contributions may be mailed to Chen Xichuan, South-to-North Water Diversion Office, State Council, No. 58 Nanxiang Jie, Xuanwu, Beijing or emailed to chenxc@mwr.gov.cn

Sources from the office said that the Middle Route Project and Eastern Route Project have been worked out, while the Western Route Project is in the early stages of preparation.

Oil Trading Center to Open in Shanghai

By Zhao Hongyi

Shanghai may again be home to an oil transaction center as early as by the end of this year. The center would trade forward contracts for refined oil products, such as gasoline, diesel, kerosene and fuel oil.

The four major shareholders in the proposed center, PetroChina, Sinopec, Sinochem and CNOOC, will hold a meeting by the end of this month to prepare for going operational. The center is expected to have registered capital of around 100 million yuan.

The center would be the first to open in this

country in nearly a decade after two futures trading centers in Beijing and Shanghai were forced to close in 1995 because speculation was running out of control. The proposed facility would differ from its forerunners by dealing in forward contracts, which are more standardized and regulated than futures.

Plans call for the center to have 100 members, including oil producers, users and qualified traders. The move is intended to begin the process of adjusting state-set oil prices in China, which are widely considered very low compared to world standards.

In keeping with its WTO membership promises, China will open its retail oil products market by the end of this year and the domestic wholesale oil product market in 2007.

"If we haven't learned how to avoid the risk of price fluctuations by then, we will be in a very, very passive position in price setting and risk hedging," said Fan Chenyu, market analyst at Shanghai Nandu Futures Brokering.

Last year, China became the second largest oil consumer in the world, surpassing Japan and trailing only the US.

Best Buy Set to Tap Chinese Market

By Tang Fuchun

Best Buy Co., one of the world's largest home appliance and electronics retailers, plans to expand into the Chinese mainland market, said CEO Bradbury H. Anderson in Beijing last Friday.

The US-based Fortune 500 company purchased \$18 billion-worth of home appliance products worldwide last year.

Best Buy set up its Asia-Pacific headquarters and global procurement center in Shanghai last September. Although he did not give specific figures, Anderson said that the company had set an objective of purchasing around \$1.2 billion of products from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan this year.

There are as yet no Best Buy outlets in this country, but industry insiders have speculated that once one opens, the chain will be able to quickly expand around China. Best Buy is currently working to strengthen ties with domestic suppliers like Haier and Hisense as it prepares to take on Chinese competitors such as Gome and Dazhong.

The huge purchasing plan represents a golden opportunity for Chinese suppliers, in part because it should provide a window for shipments to Best Buy's many outlets in the US and Canada without worries about possible trade barriers and dumping charges.



Best Buy Co. CEO Bradbury H. Anderson (left) led a company delegation to a meeting with Cheng Siwei, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of 10th National People's Congress, in the Great Hall of the People on Friday morning.

Photo by Tang Fuchun

Report Reveals Advertising Boom Last Year

By Guo Yuandan

Companies in the greater China region, including the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, shelled out 283.7 billion yuan for advertising last year, according to a report released by CVSC-TNS Research (CTR) Co. on February 3.

CTR, a joint venture between European media research firm Taylor Nelson Sofres and an affiliate of China's state-owned China Central Television, cooperated with Hong Kong-based admanGo and Taiwan-based Rainmaker International Group to compile the report, which states that advertising expenditures in the region (excluding radio spots and outdoor ads) leapt 32 percent from the year before.

The Chinese mainland accounted for 54 percent of the advertising spree, followed by Taiwan with 33 percent and Hong Kong with 13 percent.

Advertising expenditures in the mainland last year shot up 39 percent from 2002 to 154.4 billion yuan, led by an over-60 percent increase in advertising by the cosmetics industry and other heavy pushes by the retail, food product and real estate industries.

The report shows that different industries dominate advertising in each major area of the greater China region. Medicine and healthcare products were the subject of four of the five biggest ad campaigns in the mainland last year, while retail and entertainment dominated advertising in Hong Kong and telecom services and cell phones got the most ads in Taiwan.

A closer look at three major mainland cities, Beijing Shanghai and Guangzhou, reveals different patterns of advertising in each. The entertainment industry was a major ad buyer in Shanghai, but failed to crack the top five in the other cities, where telecom companies made strong showings.

The implementation of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland and the approach of the 2008 Beijing Olympics are expected to keep advertising spending growing at a healthy clip this year and into the near future, according to the report.



China Construction Bank brought its rate of non-performing assets under 10 percent last year.

Photo by Photocom

China Construction Bank to Sell Bad Assets

By James Liu

International investors will have an opportunity to buy non-performing assets worth 4.2 billion yuan from the China Construction Bank (CCB), as the bank has decided to sell 162 mortgaged real estate projects in 58 major cities around the country.

More than 70 percent of the projects are in Liaoning, Guangdong, Shandong and Heilongjiang provinces.

Last year, the bank sold 10.4 billion yuan of mortgaged assets, reeling in its rate of non-performing assets to under 10 percent. CCB also signed an agreement last year with American investment banking firm Morgan Stanley to resolve around 4 billion yuan of bad assets, according to a bank employee surnamed Yang as quoted

in a *People's Daily* report on Wednesday. "We have to speed up the disposal of those non-performing assets because we plan to go public," Yang said.

Chinese law stipulates that commercial banks' capital adequacy ratio will have to reach eight percent, the minimum required by the Basel Capital Accord, before 2005 when all domestic commercial banks will go public.

The bank has selected China International Capital Corporation, Morgan Stanley, and Citibank Global Finance to serve as financial advisers for its IPO, *Beijing Times* reported on Monday. CCB plans to go public in the US, Hong Kong and Chinese mainland markets at the same time, aiming to collect a total of 60 billion yuan.

Tom.com Picks Nasdaq, HK to List Web Business

By James Liu

Hong Kong-based multimedia company Tom.com is set to list its Chinese mainland Internet wing on New York's Nasdaq stock market and Hong Kong's Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) on March 11.

Tom Online's IPO is expected to net as much as HK\$5.84 billion and equate to an assets haul of HK\$562.2-871.8 million for Tom.com.

Internet industry analyst Michael Yin said that, considering the recovery of the Internet industry and recent popularity of Chinese Internet companies on Nasdaq, Tom Online's stock is likely to sell well and sell high.

The IPOs should give Tom Online capital

to expand its services and enhance its competitiveness. "The growth of Tom Online in the past year has been enormous in mobile services, online advertising and online games," said Yin.

Tom Online told Nasdaq that its revenues in 2003 hit US\$77.03 million, more than double the previous year's figure of US\$29.98 million, and it earned US\$19.57 million in net profits, a dramatic rise from its US\$8.35 million in losses in 2002.

Wireless value-added services including mobile messages, ring tone downloads and picture downloads were the biggest source of revenue for Tom Online, accounting for 72.5 percent of the total figure.

BOC Launches RMB Services in HK

By James Liu

On Wednesday, the Bank of China (Hong Kong) (BOCHK) launched personal Renminbi (RMB) services, meaning customers can now deposit, exchange and withdraw RMB from personal accounts. The bank announced the same day that it was planning to issue RMB bank cards in the near future.

The bank's RMB services extend to savings and fixed deposit accounts with maturity terms ranging from one week to three months. Interest rates applied to RMB savings accounts will range from 0.5 percent to 0.7 percent.

BOCHK is also now offering its customers two-way RMB and HK dollar exchange services and over 300 million yuan in RMB notes has been sent to major bank outlets in Hong Kong.

Securities Firms OK'd to Issue Bonds

By Sun Yongjian

The State Council gave the green light for the over 120 securities brokering companies in China to issue bonds at a meeting on February 20.

An article in *Shanghai Securities* on Monday reported the new policy may take effect as early as next month.

Domestic securities companies have long pushed for this policy as a means of bringing in badly-needed capital.

Seven large brokers, including Galaxy Securities and Guotai and Jun'an Securities, have already filed applications and are expected to be the first firms given official permission to issue bonds. Market analysts have speculated that China's securities brokers are currently facing cash shortages of 70 to 80 billion yuan.

Agilent Taking Aim

By Chen Ying

In the new year, Agilent will focus on wireless communication, semiconductors, life sciences and chemical analysis in the China market, Huo Feng, general manager of Agilent Technologies (China) said during a press conference at the Ascott Hotel last Friday.

The US-based high-tech company also plans to expand its research and development efforts in this country.

Earlier this year, the company established the Agilent Semiconductor Solution Center (ASSC), focused on creating solutions for the rapidly developing handset and consumer electric markets, in Shanghai. The center currently has around 100 employees, but that figure is planned to expand to nearly 1,000 in five years.

Yu Qingsuo, general manager of Agilent's China Semiconductor Test Operation section told *Beijing Today*, "China is the third largest market for semiconductors in the world and demand here should grow around 25 percent a year and hit around \$35 billion to \$40 billion by 2007. In 2004, Agilent will continue developing its advantages in this field to provide better services to the domestic semiconductor industry."

GE Pitching Bonds in China

By Zhao Hongyi

A delegation of General Electric executives led by Kathryn Cassidy, vice president for GE Financial Global, visited Shanghai and Beijing over the past week in order to promote sales of GE's financial bonds.

The delegation visited a number of Chinese financial institutions, including the headquarters of China's four state-owned commercial banks.

GE Financial has conducted several successful rounds of bond promotions in this country, selling hundreds of millions of dollars of bonds to domestic buyers in 2003 alone.

Sinochem International Gets Good Grade from S&P

By Zhao Hongyi

Following a thorough examination, Standard & Poor's has issued a comprehensive rating of publicly listed, state-owned petrochemical company Sinochem International, according to a Xinhua report Monday this week.

Of the 101 aspects of the company's internal management checked in the examination, S&P gave positive ratings on 58 points, negative ratings on 21 and neutral ratings on 22 points. Sinochem International sought out the corporate rating firm in order to identify possible obstacles to its continued development and drive to globalize.

The Xinhua report quoted S&P's report as saying, "Problems exist in supervision of the company by its board and shareholders, its salary mechanism and other realms."

The exact results have not been made public, but the rating stands "as a good example to the more than 1,000 companies listed on the domestic A-share dominated market," said Zhou Qingye, vice president of the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

Jerde Gives Ideas for Capital's Growth

By Dong Nan

Curtis Scharfenaker, vice president of the Jerde Partnership, an American architectural design firm, came to Beijing on Wednesday to give a presentation on ideas about urban construction in the capital to local media.

During the two-hour briefing, Scharfenaker introduced many of the Jerde Partnership's past projects, including urban planning for Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympics, the Gateway in Salt Lake City and the Cyber-center currently under construction in Hong Kong. He explained that all the firms' designs were connected by a philosophy of breaking through conventional separations between public and private space and building residential areas that fit local communities and cultures.

Scharfenaker specifically suggested that the many historic sites and commercial centers in the center of Beijing be protected and more downtown space be zoned as residential.

Pirate Attacks on the Rise

Kuala Lumpur, January 28 (AFP) - Pirate attacks on ships worldwide increased last year to 445, with 21 sailors killed and 71 crew members or passengers missing, the London-based International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reports.

This was the second highest number of attacks since the IMB's Malaysia-based Piracy Reporting Centre began compiling statistics in 1991, slightly below the 469 incidents in 2000 but sharply up from the 370 attacks in 2002.

The IMB's annual report for 2003 shows that the violence used in the attacks continued to rise, with 21 seafarers killed and 88 injured, up from 10 killed the previous year. "There were 71 crew or passengers missing in 2003 and

this should be considered along with the 21 confirmed killed," the report said.

The number of attacks using guns rose to 100 from 68 and the number of hostages taken nearly doubled to 359 seafarers. Ships were boarded in 311 instances and a total of 19 ships were hijacked.

"In 23 percent of the attacks, tankers were the targets," said IMB director Captain Pottengal Mukundan.

Indonesia continued to record the highest number of attacks with 121 reported incidents. Bangladesh ranked second with 58 attacks and Nigeria was third with 39 attacks.

The Malacca Straits, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, had

seen a drop in piracy attacks in 2002 with 16 incidents compared to 75 in 2000, but there was an increase to 28 incidents last year.

The narrow straits run between Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, and the report calls on the Indonesian authorities to increase their efforts against piracy.

Attacks in Malaysian waters were reduced to 5 in 2003 from 14 in 2002, with none reported in the last six months of last year.

There was also a drop in the number of attacks in Cameroon, Ecuador, Gabon, Guyana, Ivory Coast, Singapore Straits and Thailand.

Somalia saw a 50 percent drop in reported attacks in 2003, but the

eastern and north-eastern coasts "remain high-risk areas for hijackings and kidnapping of the crew for ransom by local warlords."

Analyst's Take:

Ninety percent of world trade is transported by sea. This provides plenty of space for pirates. Annual losses caused by pirates amount to about \$25 billion, \$16 billion of which is robbed by pirates in Southeast Asia.

Pirates are now contacting each other by internet and emails, sharing information, designing attacks, and coordinating with each other in selling the goods robbed. Latest reports say the pirates and attacks in Southeast Asia are controlled by five large groups, though no more

details are available.

Wars and poverty are the major reasons why there are so many pirates worldwide, such as the Aceh independent force in Indonesia, Abbu Sayyaf separatists in the Philippines, anti-government forces in Sri Lanka and military groups in Somalia.

At present, we have not yet found any more tools in combating pirates, except the usual law enforcement. Countries are joining hands in this regard. The United Nations is considering and proposing global and joint efforts to crackdown on pirates.

— Shi Gang, researcher of piracy, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations

Lifting the Lid on Coca-Cola

Brussels, February 20 (AP) - The European Union's head office said Thursday it was still investigating Coca-Cola's business practices in Europe and had not made a decision on whether the drinks giant was violating EU competition rules.

Despite opening an investigation against Coke in 1999, EU spokesman Tilman Lueder told reporters the antitrust case against the Atlanta-based company "was still pending."

His comments came in response to a story Thursday in *The Wall Street Journal* that the EU head office was finalizing its investigation, focusing on Coke's business practices in Germany and Belgium and could soon lay charges.

An antitrust probe began - and raids were carried out on Coca-Cola offices in Britain, Germany, Austria, Denmark and Belgium - in 1999 after competitors complained about aggressive sales practices designed to keep them

out of key markets.

Competitors like PepsiCo Inc. accuse Coca-Cola of cornering European markets with rebate payments to retailers, a practice EU regulators regard as an unfair way for already dominant companies to secure customer loyalty.

If found guilty of unfair trading, Coca-Cola may face hefty fines and orders to change its selling practices.

Analyst's Take:

The direction of the EU's probe is right and clear. The authorities should do whatever they can to establish the principle of fair competition and protect a fair competitive environment.

But if we come back to the market, rebates are common here and there. Therefore, it will be a long process to define and settle the case.

— Deng Hongbo, vice chairman, Beijing International Trade Association

Citigroup Acquires Koram

Seoul, February 23 (AFP) - US-based Citigroup is set to become the first foreign financial group to take over a South Korean lender following an agreement to buy Koram bank for US\$2.7 billion.

The London-based emerging markets bank Standard Chartered had also been trying to acquire Koram, whose sound local network is attractive to foreign banks seeking to penetrate South Korea's retail banking market.

Koram operates 222 domestic branches with total assets of 43 trillion won. This would be the largest ever foreign investment in South Korea's financial industry and analysts suggested the deal would accelerate consolidation in the sector.

"Citigroup's acquisition of Koram Bank may possibly trigger a fresh round of mergers and acquisitions in the banking industry," said Shinyoung Securities analyst Cho Byung-Jun.



A man exits a Seoul office of Citibank, February 23, 2004.

In the largest ever foreign investment in South Korea, Citigroup Inc. said on Monday it would buy KorAm Bank for US\$2.7 billion to extend its push into emerging markets.

Reuters Photo



A robot is waving hands after purchasing a bag of pet food. The robot was developed by TMSUK, a professional automation industry company from Japan.

Hundreds of robots are on display at the "2004 International Robot Expo" which opened on February 26 in Fukuoka, Japan. The expo collects the latest automation industry's achievements.

Xinhua/AFP Photo

US Anti-dumping Move Angers China

Beijing, February 20 (People's Daily) - China is seriously concerned about a US ruling that has slapped dumping duties on color television imports from China, said an official of the Ministry of Commerce Tuesday.

The US Department of Commerce imposed tariffs ranging from 27.94 percent to 78.45 percent on color television sets imported from China last November.

The official, from the ministry's Import and Export Fair Trade Bureau, pointed out that most color television sets exported by China to the United States contain parts that China imports from Japan, the United States and other countries and regions.

"Under such circumstances, it is very hard to understand the US move to impose such high dumping tariffs on Chinese enterprises, unless the United States regards these nations and regions as having dumped color television parts on China," said the official.

He said in China the production and sale of color televisions depends on the market, and the related companies are responsible for their own business and compete with each other.

The anti-dumping tariffs violates the WTO's basic principles, so it seriously discriminates against Chinese companies, China believes.

China will keep a close eye on this case, and will continue to negotiate with the United States to safeguard the rights of Chinese color television companies, said the official.

Media Report:

Latest reports say Japanese TV and home appliances giants including Sony, Panasonic, Sanyo, Toshiba and Orion have been playing important roles in the US color TV anti-dumping cases against the imports from China, providing the US with information from technical data to trade volume statistics.

Chinese officials in the US are

contacting representatives from the Japanese corporations in the US, hoping sincere cooperation between Japan and China can settle the case to the satisfaction of all sides.

— People's Daily, February 25

Analyst's Take:

We have long suspected Japanese involvement in the US anti-dumping suit against China-made TV sets and parts.

The Japanese dominate the US TV market. China is aggressively increasing its market share. That's the real story.

We have no way to retaliate against the Japanese. A new round of World Trade Organization talks is coming up, and rules to define and punish unfair competition will be discussed, but it still needs time.

The only way to go at present is to negotiate with the US and settle the problem in a way that's understood and accepted by both sides.

— Chen Dawei, researcher, Beijing WTO Center

AT&T Plans to Cut 4,600 Jobs

New York, February 25 (Reuters) - AT&T Corp. on Wednesday said it was planning to cut 8 percent of its workforce, or about 4,600 jobs, this year in a drive to cut costs.

The largest US long-distance company said the moves would save about \$400 million this year, and leave it with about 57,000 employees. The company cut 18 percent of its workforce in 2003 and saved \$800 million.

DaimlerChrysler Mulls Mitsubishi Move

Stuttgart, February 20 (Dow Jones) - DaimlerChrysler AG said it supports the efforts of Mitsubishi Motors Corp to come up with a new business plan but, at the same time, said it was considering all options for its investment in the company, including a possible disposal.

Mitsubishi Motors is struggling with heavy losses and weighing a capital increase to improve its financial situation. There has been speculation that DaimlerChrysler planned to replace the management, or even unload its 37% holding in the Japanese carmaker.

(Chris Reiter)

HP Earnings Jump Up

San Jose, California, February 20 (AP) - Hewlett-Packard Co.'s quarterly earnings jumped 30 percent, thanks to its successful outsourcing in Asian countries.

For the three months ended January 31, HP reported a profit of \$936 million, compared with \$721 million in the same period last year.

Depreciation of the dollar and outsourcing of production in Asia enabled HP products to become more affordable worldwide.

(Rachel Konrad)

Intel Sets Ambitious Wireless Strategy

Santa Clara, California, February 25 (Newsfactor-Network) - Intel outlined its latest wireless strategy today at the 3GSM World Congress 2004 industry gathering in France. The new strategy focuses on the integration of current and next-generation networks.

The chip giant offered details of its forthcoming cellular and baseband processors, including "Hermon," a dual-mode chipset for mobile phones operating on 3G networks using the UMTS/WCDMA technologies.

(Jay Wrolstad)

Greenspan: Cut Social Security

Washington, February 25 (Reuters) - US Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan on Wednesday said the US should weigh trimming future social security benefits by raising the retirement age and offering less generous adjustments to future payments.

Urging swift action on a spiraling budget deficit -- forecast to hit a record \$521 billion this year -- Greenspan told the US Congress that spending restraint was the best way to meet future commitments rather than raising taxes and endangering the economy.

(Glenn Somerville)



AFP Photo

Ozawa Returns to Childhood Home



Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa (center) enjoyed an unexpected reunion with former Beijing neighbor Chen Zhenshu, 85, (left of Ozawa) on Monday morning. Photo provided by Wang Lanshun

By Wang Fang

World famous Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa made a surprise visit to a local site on Monday morning, not a concert hall or music school but an otherwise unremarkable residence at No. 69, Xinkai Hutong in Dongcheng District.

Ozawa was in town to lead the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert at the Great Hall of the People on Tuesday.

The trip to Xinkai Hutong was actually a kind of return home for Ozawa. He and his parents lived in that courtyard, or *siheyuan*, from 1936, when he was just one year old, until 1941.

Ozawa first returned to his childhood home in 1976, when he had already earned an international reputation, along with his mother and younger brother. The courtyard had been broken apart and was home to 11 different families,

but his mother was still able to locate a spot where the young Ozawa had marked his height on a wall.

Afterwards, the famed Japanese conductor made a point of returning to the courtyard with his mother every time he came to the capital. The last time he made the trip was in 2002, but that time was on his own, as his mother died earlier that year. During that visit, he buried some of his mother's ashes in the yard of her former home in accordance with her final wishes.

When former neighbor Cheng Zhenshu, 85, heard that Ozawa was bound for the courtyard again, she was very excited. She surprised Ozawa by meeting him at the door to the courtyard, and then they embraced each other in a warm hug before turning and bowing to the little garden under which his mother's ashes are buried.

Student Showers Save Water

By Chen Ying

Shower rooms installed with new electronic payment systems meant to conserve water will go operational at facilities on the campus of Beijing University on Monday.

The effectiveness of this system has already been proven in the university's Wanliu Campus for graduate students. Since it was installed last year, average water use per student in bathrooms on that campus has dropped from 300 liters to 100 liters per shower.

The water conserving system works by charging students for every liter of water used over a base limit of 100 liters, encouraging them to cut water use in order to cut personal expenses. Student showers in the Health Science Center are slated to get the system soon.

Beijing Youth Daily reported on

Tuesday that since installing a similar system in all showering areas on campus last September, Beijing Normal University has cut water use by about 16,000 tons.

More than 30 universities in Beijing, meaning around half of all universities in the city, have installed water conservation systems.

An unnamed spokesperson from the Beijing Municipal Water Conservancy Bureau told *Star Daily* on Tuesday, "The Beijing government is attempting to carry out a stepped calculation method for collecting water use fees this year. That means families that surpass the set standard will have to pay extra for each ton of extra water used."

He added that the exact limit for per capita water use has yet to be set and was under discussion.

Photographer, Filmmaker, Poet: Wim Wenders in Local Spotlight



Lizard Rock by Wim Wenders Photo by Lily By Iris Miao

The three-month China leg of the world tour of *Pictures from the Surface of the Earth*, an exhibition of photographs by famed German filmmaker Wim Wenders, kicked off with the opening of a show at the China Millennium Monument Art Museum last Friday.

The exhibition's tour has taken it to such venues as the Museum Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Guggenheim Bilbao and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. On March 21, the photos will move on to Shanghai and Guangzhou for one month stays in each city.

The show consists of 50 huge panoramic pictures, the largest of which is over four meters long, taken by Wenders during his travels since 1983. Subjects of his camera include small towns or landscapes in the US, Cuba's capital Havana, forests and temples in Japan, Jerusalem, the coast of Galilee and deserted expanses of the Australian outback.

Curator Cui Qiao, who works for the Berlin Film Festival, knows Wenders and told Beijing Today on

Wednesday that she had no trouble convincing him to bring the show to China, as he had long been interested in visiting this country.

According to the show's introduction, Wenders once explained his artistic philosophy by saying, "Photography lets you capture the essence of a place the first time you see it... Before you see the picture, you feel it coming to you, you hear its call. Landscapes sometimes are dying to tell their stories, to pass them on..."

Prominent Chinese photographer and Wenders fan Li Yuxiang noted that some of the subjects of Wenders' works seem common, but that poems written by the artist to accompany each piece add interesting layers of depth and significance. "It definitely shows the perspective of a film director. It seems that his pictures are telling stories," opined Li.

Wenders was scheduled to attend the opening, but because he had just undergone minor surgery, was not able to make the trip. However, he still plans to come to Beijing during the local exhibition and is likely to show up around March 10. During his six-day stay, he will participate in a series of lectures and open discussions on the arts at Beijing University, the Beijing Film Institute and the Sanlian Bookstore.

Meanwhile, three of his feature films, *Paris, Texas*, *Wings of Desire* and *Buena Vista Social Club*, as well as three of his documentaries, are being shown every weekend of the show in the museum's B1 multi-media hall, starting at 10 am.

Beggars Seek Sympathy, Cash Online

By Guo Yuandan

Residents of Chengdu, Sichuan Province have been surprised to receive emails from a man begging for money, according to a report in *Beijing News* on Monday. The Internet-savvy beggar is brazen enough to give his real name and a bank account number for the electronic transfer of alms.

The writer of the email claims to be an employed native of Chengdu, living with his ill mother following the death of his father and abandonment by his girlfriend. In each mail, he asks for only 10 yuan in order to buy food.

A reporter from *Beijing News* tracked down the innovative beggar, named Li Dan, and reported his findings on Sunday. Li, 21, is college graduate and began his online begging simply as a fun experiment. Once the money started trickling in, however, he got serious and he has so far received 168 yuan from people all over the country.

Jin Ling, a local recipient of a similar kind of begging email, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday, "I don't believe what they wrote. If they were so poor or homeless, how could they send email?"



Chen Lili

Photo provided by Chengdu Economic Daily

Miss/Mr. Universe?

By James Liu

When a 173-centimeter-tall beautiful woman with long hair strolled in off the street last Saturday afternoon, it seemed like just a regular day at the office for the Sichuan region organizing committee for the 2004 Miss Universe China contest. However, after she had asked for a contestant application and completed most of the preliminary registration procedures, Chen Lili shocked committee director Zhang Ruiling and his colleagues when she asked whether transsexuals could take part in the pageant.

Zhang got in touch with the contest's world headquarters in New York and learned the Miss Universe pageant is open to the transgendered. "Chen will

be treated the same as all other participants. Whether she can enter the finals will depend on her performance," he told *Chengdu Economic Daily*.

However, Chen is not in the running yet, as she has not provided the organizing committee proof that she has a university degree, a necessary condition for Miss Universe qualification. *Chengdu Economic Daily* reported Monday that the 24-year-old only has a high school education background.

Chen underwent a sex change operation in Qingdao, Shandong Province last November. On February 11, she received a new ID card identifying her as a female citizen of Nanchong, Sichuan.



KFC has released a new pork-based burger at outlets across the country. Photo by Lily

Flu Forces Shift to Bird Alternatives

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Global fast food giant KFC and local chain Quanjudu Roast Duck, both known for their chicken- and duck-based foods, have made conspicuous shifts to non-poultry products in order to attract customers as public fear is rising regarding avian influenza, popularly known as bird flu.

An article in *Beijing Youth Daily* last Thursday reported that KFC's new roasted pork chop burger was the company's second non-chicken product to be introduced in the domestic market and would be available for a long time. KFC started developing such new non-chicken products, based on pork, seafood and vegetables, for the Chinese market long before the outbreak of bird flu, but accelerated the release of this new burger in order to counter flagging sales.

Jiang Junxian, manager of Beijing Quanjudu Roast Duck Co. told *Beijing Youth Daily* that his company had spent only one week developing new products not based on duck in order to reduce economic losses in the wake of the bird flu scare. Among the restaurants' new offerings are dishes based on scallops, pork and eel.

Jiang added Quanjudu constantly developed new products, but the bird flu forced some foods in the works to be added to menus before originally planned.



Lu Lihan and Li Xiaotian hoist their awards. Photo by Elizabeth Atterbury

Imaginative Kids Headed to Athens

By Su Wei

The awards ceremony for the Third Visa Olympics of the Imagination in China was held Thursday at the Grand Hotel Beijing. The top prizes, all-expense paid trips to Athens, Greece to attend this summer's Olympics, went to Lu Lihan, 10, of Chongqing and Li Xiaotian, 11, of Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

The Visa International-sponsored competition started last August and drew around 450,000 young participants from 20 domestic cities. The Olympics of Imagination is an international arts program open to children aged nine to 13 from 20 countries around the world. The theme of this year's global event has been "How the Olympic Games Can Help Create a Better Future."

When she received her award, Lu said, "One day I dreamt I became a treble clef dancing at the staff of the Olympic music and then decided to draw a picture of the dream."

"In my picture, I have animals and people taking part in the Olympic Games together because I think human beings and animals can live together in harmony," explained Li at the ceremony.

Lu and Li will go up against 28 other winners of national competitions in the global finals in Italy this August. The top prize is a trip to the 2006 Winter Olympics.



Photo by Cheng Gong

Sure Sign of Spring

By Zhang Ran

Amateur botanists and other flower fans have been heading to Wofu Temple in the Beijing Botanical Gardens since an over 1,300-year-old *calyx canthus*, otherwise known as a wintersweet tree, blossomed following the spring's first rain on Tuesday.

By Chen Ying

The second meeting of the Beijing Committee of the Tenth People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC) was held at Jing Xi Hotel from February 15 to 19. Meanwhile, the Second Meeting of the Twelfth Beijing People's Congress (BPC) was held from February 16 to 21. The two meetings really caught local people's attention last week.

During the two meetings, delegates submitted a great number of proposals. The committee received 1,284 proposals and 1,234 cases were put on the record. 182 proposals related to the economy, science and technology; 434 were about urban construction and management; 264 were about education, culture, sanitation and sports; and 354 proposals dealt with society and legislation.

Congress members issued 392 proposals this time. Among them, 38 proposals were handed over by delegation groups. There were 354 cases in which a proposal was put forward by more than 10 congress members. There were 66 cases about finance and the economy; 34 about rural issues and farmers; 154 related to urban construction and management; 73 were about education, science and technology, culture, sanitation and sports; 60 were about internal affairs and legislation; five cases were about nationality and overseas Chinese affairs. And 65 proposals have been combined into five categories and will be dealt with by the municipal government. The relevant departments will deal with the other proposals.

Thanks to media reports, local people have got to know more about these proposals. The following content goes over some of the proposals in more detail, as well as what the delegates said, in order to explain some of the issues facing Beijing and potential changes.



Delegates discuss proposals.

Numerous Proposals Put Forward

New mayor says administration will strive for transparency

Newly elected Beijing Mayor Wang Qishan said his government would step up efforts to make its affairs more transparent to the public.

"I hope the media and residents will give us some leeway in communicating at the beginning of procedures to make government affairs more transparent," he told a post-election press conference held at the weekend. "This will help encourage our officials to speak more to the public and media."

Wang Weiping, BPC member, from Xicheng District

Beijing should establish an innovation laboratory. For instance, the government restricted the number of trucks that could enter the urban area. This made it more difficult to provide the coal that people need so the coal price went up.

Every policy or innovation for urban management can affect both public security and social progress. As a part of the system, an innovation laboratory could help in researching urban problems and providing systematic plans.

Municipal government to invest 5.48 billion yuan to boost city economy

On February 18, Wu Shixiong, director of the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Finance, told the 2nd session of the 12th Beijing People's Congress that 4.48 billion



Delegates were awarded for excellent proposals.

Photo by Gloom

yuan would be invested in infrastructure and one billion yuan would go towards the 2008 Beijing Olympic Fund in 2004.

Wang Zhuo, BPC member, from Xicheng District

We urgently need to establish an urban economic prediction and warning mechanism to adjust and control the regional economy more steadily and safely. Till now, the investment in real estate is still very high in Beijing. Such a mechanism could help dispel uncertainty over capital flow.

Beijing mayor promises to protect employment

Beijing mayor Wang Qishan vowed to keep the city's urban unemployment rate under 2.5 percent this year.

The capital city is facing a more serious employment problem in 2004 than in 2003 since 230,000 local farmers are already here and another 200,000 new

migrant laborers are expected to swarm into Beijing this year, according to the local labor and social security authorities.

Wang Qishan has promised to create 100,000 new jobs in local residential communities this year.

Liu Juncai, BPC member, from Dongcheng District

Some enterprises have been restructuring their management, with the effect that many employees find they no longer enjoy the welfare they used to have. I've found that some companies have benefitted greatly from these changes and their production efficiency is higher than before. But this is not the whole story. The related departments should pay attention to this issue. The employees' benefit shouldn't be ignored.

Beijing to lessen traffic pressure by adjusting city planning

In order to resolve the problem of Beijing's serious traffic jams, the government is considering a strategic adjustment of the city's layout.

To improve the traffic situation in cities, urban planners opt for building more bridges and roads. But this is reactive rather than proactive.

Mayor Wang Qishan said the municipality would take the opportunity of the Olympic projects to adjust the current pattern of the city. In recent years, the municipality has increasingly suffered from more traffic jams and strained sup-

ply of energy resources.

Shi Xiangyang, PPCC Beijing Committee member

I think there are three main reasons why Beijing's traffic jams are getting worse. First of all, the whole layout of the bus route isn't rational. Beijing has more than 500 bus routes. But every route is rather long and many have to cross the urban center and prosperous areas. Moreover, the established bus stations are not reasonable. For instance, there are nearly 120 routes around Gongzhufen. The bus stations here cause really heavy traffic. Thirdly, the distribution relationship between bus stations and stoplight and crosswalk is irrational. The lack of a special roadway for buses is part of this problem.

Water Issue

Beijing mayor Wang Qishan revealed that information on waste water treatment would be released to the media in the near future. Concerned about the lack of water in Beijing, Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League handed over its proposal for strengthening Beijing water resource management.

"It's time to establish a unified water resource management system. Till now, the separated management systems have cut off the relationship between the surface water and the groundwater, the relationship between the urban water use and the rural water use, the relationship between water supply and water utilization, the benefit relationship between the water supply

department and water utilization department," the league mentioned in its proposal.

Meanwhile, the league emphasized that it's very important to set up a water price system to optimize water resource distribution.

"Urban development should match water consumption. Improving sewage treatment and the use of recycled water is a good way to save water. It's also important to protect the comprehensive management for the water environment, helping the lakes and rivers' water quality reach the appropriate standard for Beijing," the league added.

Other issues

Li Xiaotong, PPCC Beijing Committee member

I'm a psychologist, and more than 300,000 people have visited our psychological consultation center since 1987. The government should establish a special department to set up industry standards and a psychologist qualification examination system.

Qiang Lei, PPCC Beijing Committee member

To make the 2008 Olympic Games more successful, it's necessary to pay attention to the animal protection problem. South Korea was condemned worldwide during the FIFA World Cup 2002 for eating dog meat. So Beijing should close all restaurants selling dog meat. Just like forbidding eating national protected wildlife, the government should also forbid the selling and eating of dog meat.

Readers & Leaders

What's the Value of a Degree?

By Lizi Hesling

This is a question being heard with increasing frequency not only now that more and more people are being admitted to university but also as greater numbers turn to illegitimate "diploma mills" to buy fake certificates.

The recent case of a woman in Wuhan who passed a series of exams with top marks in an attempt to get a governmental post but was later shown to have fake junior college credentials has made the issue of fraudulent degrees a hot topic. And some are asking why such an obviously talented candidate shouldn't be given the job she was after.

The thing is that her credentials were false. But what is the problem with that? Doesn't everyone do it? I don't know anyone who hasn't fiddled with their CV just a little in an attempt to keep their head above water in this overpopulated age of fierce competition where we are all working with a mass of strangers. Isn't the most important thing in the end actual job performance?

The problem is how to sort the gold dust from the sand - how do you choose the right candidate when you are inundated with hundreds of application forms? A degree has long been a way of separating people. But as the Wuhan case shows, it is a method of sorting that has very little to do with real quality. It is more about class. In ancient China, only the male children of wealthy families ever got the chance to study for the imperial examination. It's similar today. Although more students now come from poorer families, they immediately become part of the "elite" when they enter university. It is the same in the UK where I come from. But as one of the "elite", I know how empty my high-class status really is. I studied for four years to get an MA from a prestigious British university (it's true,

I have the certificate to prove it!) but this only means I had the money and the inclination to read books and write pointless essays for 14% of my life. I do not want to undermine my degree - I learnt a lot - but I cannot say it made me a better job candidate.

The best preparation for work is work. A degree, at least in the UK, seems to be more about play than anything else. Most of the things students are asked to do at university are of absolutely no use in the work place. Sure, a great many jobs, such as those in the fields of medicine and law, require high levels of knowledge and training, but most of this training is undertaken only after a degree in medicine or law has been granted. And however highly trained you are, most of the work you do on a daily basis is basic and repetitive enough that (almost) anyone could do it.

If a higher education is largely about money why shouldn't people be buying degrees (granted for much less than a real degree actually costs)? Is it because lying is fundamentally and morally wrong? For me, the worst thing about such lying is that it perpetuates the status quo in which jobs are handed out merely on the basis of having had a university education and with far less regard for a candidate's real aptitude for the job.

Tell the truth, get the job anyway, and do it well. Now that would be really impressive.

The writer is an independent photographer working in Beijing.

We welcome your letters and articles, preferably around 700 words. Please give your full name, current address and phone number (not necessarily for publication). You can email us at comment@ynet.com or fax us at (010) 6590 2525.

The views expressed in this column are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Beijing Today.



I want to make a point!

Photos by Cheng Tieliang

By Su Wei

Under the spotlight of the country's media, a national conference on China's financial reform was held earlier this month. The conference aimed to address growing worries about China's financial industry, based principally on massive bad debts in the nation's banks. There are also concerns about how the country's stock markets are being used.

Since last July, the People's Bank of China has warned three times that China's financial industry faces major problems. Each time it called on domestic financial institutions to pay due attention to the fast increase in loans, such as those issued by banks merely with the purpose of reducing the proportion of their bad loans.

Loans for real estate developers, the construction industry and individuals who have more than one apartment should be dealt with more cautiously, the bank said.

Meanwhile, the China Banking Regulatory Commission has urged all the banks, credit cooperatives and other financial institutions to divide their loan business in to five risk degrees before issuing loans.

China's securities and insurance regulatory commissions also delivered their own regulations last year to insurance and securities companies, especially those about to go public and become listed on stock markets.

"These actions show the level of concern there is over financial risks in China," said Huang Yanfen, a professor at the Public Administration College of Renmin University. She published a study on financial risks in China last month.

The RAND Corporation, an American organization that researches challenges facing public and private sectors around the world, estimated in 2002 that between 2005 and 2015 the negative effects on China's continued economic progress caused by its weak financial system would be more serious than those caused by unemployment, poverty, and government corruption.

Whose money?

Statistics from China's Banking Regulatory Commission show that by the end of last June, the total amount of bad loans of China's major financial institutions amounted to 2.54 trillion yuan, 19.6 percent of all loans. On a brighter note, the figure had fallen more than 3.5 percent (93.4 billion yuan) since the beginning of last year.

The 81.1-billion-yuan decrease in bad loans for the four state-owned banks (the Bank of China, the Agricultural Bank of China, China Construction Bank and the Industrial and Commercial

Anyone Need a Loan?



Beijing Financial Street

Photo by Photocom

Statistics from China's Banking Regulatory Commission show that by the end of last June, the total amount of bad loans of China's major financial institutions amounted to 2.54 trillion yuan, 19.6 percent of all loans. On a brighter note, the figure had fallen more than 3.5 percent (93.4 billion yuan) since the beginning of last year.'

Bank of China) is regarded as a significant one.

However, in Huang's study, bad loans in the banking industry remain the principal cloud over Chinese finance. She feels that the decreases do not amount to a major change in the way banks are being managed.

Huang says one method banks use to disguise bad debt is to increase the total amount of loans, thus making the proportion of bad loans apparently less daunting. "In order to meet the requirement of China's Banking Regulatory Commission to decrease the percentage of bad capital by three to four percent, banks just increased their loans," she said.

In the first three quarters of last year, total loans for the real estate industry in China amounted to 426.4 billion yuan, 37 percent of all middle and long term loans issued. "Big enterprises in large cities with complex projects, including in-

frastructure, civil and real estate construction, have middle- and long-term loans in highly monopolized industries such as roads, railways, electricity and telecommunications," Huang explained. "These characteristics suggest that the investment waves are led by the government and the loans are issued by the government." In her opinion, some of these investment projects are inefficient and bound to face difficulties in paying the money back, therefore adding to the country's bad debt.

The stock markets are another area of concern. Huang's study reveals that in most of China's listed companies, there's usually one shareholder with a controlling stake. This makes it possible for them to manipulate the company and its assets in any way they see fit. "This hinders investment in these companies and creates accounting and marketing risks," says Huang.

"Investors are drawing their

money away from the market because the focus in the stock market at the moment is on financing an enterprise instead of protecting the interests of investors. The function of the stock markets is weakening as a result," Huang believes.

Command economy hangover

Liu Jingsheng, of the Foreign Currency Department of the People's Bank of China, says the financial problems in China show the current market economic system is still unable to escape the shadow of the planned economy.

"Banks are still government administrative departments and enterprises are still attached to these departments to some degree. In fact, the relationship between banks and enterprises is administrative even though it may seem to be about capital supply and demand," Liu highlighted. "This relationship is maintained by the government. Giving loans to enterprises, therefore, becomes a favor given

by the government."

Wang Yijiang, senior researcher at the National Center for Economic Research at Tsinghua University says the state-owned banks need to conduct reform in order to operate like purely commercial banks, but the pace of this reform is somewhat restricted by the nature of the Chinese economy. "That is, due to the relatively short period of economic growth in China, enterprises usually do not have enough capital. They have to rely on loans to carry out business activities. In a developing country like China, governments, especially local governments, have to focus the greater part of their efforts on economic development and generating employment," he said. "So the government needs to assist some enterprises through interfering with banks and getting them to provide loans."

The way out

Wang says that with the Chinese financial market gradually opening up to foreign institutions, the competition between domestic and foreign financial institutions will become more fierce. "But the competition could allay some of the financial problems that we have," he said. "We need to understand that the relationship between domestic and foreign financial institutions is more than just competition. We should attract foreign investment in Chinese banks, and allow joint-ventures and eventually wholly foreign-owned financial enterprises to operate in China."

Wang says that although the influx of foreign funds can help spur financial reform in China, there are also some problems that need to be ironed out for this to take place successfully. "We need to establish and improve the system of corporate governance, the system of supervision and credit recording," he explained.

Chen Ping, an economist, is optimistic that the arrival of foreign banks can improve the current financial situation in China. "But still more efforts are needed, and policies need to be tightened up. We need a careful and all-round consideration of the financial reform," he said. "Only with more understanding of the financial conditions in China and the significance of financial reform, can the reform be adequately deep. Otherwise, if financial progress lags behind reform in other areas, problems in the industry could build."

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By James Liu

Trade relations between China and Russia suffered a blow recently when Russian police raided a local market and confiscated goods being sold by Chinese merchants.

On February 9, agents of the Russian Interior Ministry arrived at the Emila wholesale market in south Moscow and ordered Chinese merchants who had rented more than 300 stalls in the market to show personal identity documents as well as customs clearance documents for the goods. As most of the Chinese merchants had gone through Russia's well established "grey" customs clearance intermediary companies, they did not have these documents. These customs clearance companies started up in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to ease the import of essential consumer goods into Russia. Though not scrupulously legal, they have been permitted to conduct business ever since. Nevertheless, after the Chinese merchants failed to show the customs documentation, which the clearance companies never provide, the agents began to cart away their goods.

After the agents arrived at the market, trucks with containers pulled up and workers began loading up the merchandise of the Chinese businessmen.

Ironically, two days later on February 11, the Russian Customs Committee announced that in 2003, Sino-Russian trade volume reached US\$11.7 billion, an increase of 26.5 percent from the

Russian Authorities Confiscate Chinese Goods

previous year, making China the country's second biggest trade partner after Germany, reported *People's Daily*. Unfortunately, trade relations continue to be hindered by glitches in Russian law.

Chinese embassy seeks explanation

The confiscation action carried out by the Russian Interior Ministry at Emila market caused serious economic damages for the local Chinese businessmen.

Most of the Chinese businessmen in the market are farmers from Zhejiang and Fujian provinces and the commodities they were selling were products of local township enterprises, such as garments, shoes, hats and other daily necessities in the market. As their commodities have been confiscated, they've suddenly lost their means of making a livelihood. So they turned to the Chinese Embassy in Russia.

On receiving the call from the businessmen, Guo Min, consul of the Chinese Embassy and her colleagues headed down to the market to negotiate with the police. Guo Min asked the police to make sure the confiscated commodities were not arbitrarily sold, auctioned or "lost".

On February 13, Liu Guchang, Chinese Ambassador to Russia, convened an emergency meeting to discuss ways of protecting the interests of Chinese businessmen. The embassy presented a request to the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior asking that Russia, in the interests of the friendship between China and Russia, urge its government departments to protect the interests of Chinese businessmen in Russia with practical and effective measures. Also the embassy asked for the return of all the commodities confiscated by the police.

Cheap but not easy

The fact that the Chinese businessmen at Emila market couldn't produce the customs clearance documents doesn't necessarily mean that they had engaged in smuggling or evading Russian customs tariffs. The origin of the event can be traced back to the so-called "grey customs clearance" practice.

Following the unraveling of the USSR at the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian economy plunged into a serious crisis. Markets everywhere, including those in Moscow, were short of supply. To meet the everyday demands of people who lacked money, the Russian government had to import many commodities.

Consumer goods from China, though not especially high-grade, were of good enough quality and were welcome because they were cheap. A great volume of Chi-

nese goods began to flow into the Russian market. However, not all Russian businessmen engaged in the transactions could register a company in Russia. According to Russian law, these businessmen were not qualified to engage in importing. However, to encourage imports and simplify the customs procedures, the Customs Committee of Russia allowed so-called "grey customs clearance" companies to carry out importing transactions for commodities owners and provide a "one stop" service which combined transportation and customs clearance.

Customs clearance companies usually have close relations with the Russian customs and strong backing from powerful figures in the government, reported *Elite Reference* newspaper on February 24. According to the report, these companies can get favorable policies from the Russian customs, among which a fixed amount of duty for cargo shipments is the most important. In other words, the customs exempt clearance companies from the regular customs practice which requires duty be computed according to the value of each item of goods. Instead an overall duty is estimated according to the weight or volume of the commodities contained in an airplane, a train or a container. The amount of duty thus calculated is much lower than the duty if paid in regular customs declarations.

Normally, clearance companies do not supply customs clearance documents and are only responsible for transporting com-

modities from the customs-supervised warehouse and sending them to the owners' storage facilities. After this, clearance companies are no longer responsible for the follow-up even if the tax police pick on the owners.

Russia imposes an average customs duty of 15 percent for imported goods. Some textile products and household appliances, two major Chinese exports to Russia, may be subject to charges of 15 to 30 percent and 20 to 30 percent, respectively.

To lower their costs, numerous Chinese companies have turned to the grey customs clearance companies. However, while the practice may save the merchants money at the border, it also fails to provide them with proper customs documents. According to sources with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, this type of trade peaked at US\$10 billion in the mid 1990s. Theoretically, Russian regulations require legal customs clearance documents, but the government has not banned the practice of hiring customs intermediaries.

This unconventional trade practice is not unique to Sino-Russian trade. Merchants from Turkey, Pakistan and even some European countries also resort to the same measure. A Chinese merchant said that this practice can save about 45 percent in tax expenditure, reported *World News Journal* recently.

Though the Russian customs may give a green light to the practice, the Russian police and taxation departments take a very different view. If they find imported goods not backed up by legal documents, they will confiscate the goods. In order to get their goods back, some Chinese merchants resort to bribery.

The Emila event is not the first case of its kind, Zhang Nan, a colleague of consul Guo Min, told *Beijing Today*. In 2000 and 2001, Russian police confiscated Chinese goods more than 100 times around the country. The Chinese Embassy in Russia has cautioned Chinese companies against using the grey customs clearance companies.

Raids stopped for now

Police in Moscow stopped raiding Chinese stalls at Emila market on February 16 following urgent negotiations between Russia and China. However, Guo Min told Xinhua News Agency that the matter has not yet been settled. According to Ambassador Liu Guchang, the Russian police have withdrawn from the Emila market since February 20.

Zhou Yaohua, vice manager of Dongyi Shoes, a Chinese shoe manufacturer which has so far escaped the attentions of the Russian police, told *Youth Times* on February 17 that the exporters to Russia are the biggest losers in the grey customs clearance business. "You can hardly imagine the inside corruption," said Zhou. He said the confiscated goods are soon sold on other markets and the hope of getting the goods back is zero. "The police even confiscate the customs documents if the Chinese merchants actually have them. Then they just take the goods away," Zhou recalled.

Why is this happening?

The two-way, eight-lane, fly-over ring road around Moscow has a span of 100 kilometers and is commonly referred to as the "Big Ring". As the Russian economy gradually recovers, the Big Ring is gradually becoming a gold ring for businesses. French Auchan, Sweden's Ikea and Turkish company Kangaroo all have stores on the Big Ring.

Not long ago a Jewish businessman, who is said to have close relations with the Moscow municipal government, opened the Emila market, specializing in storage and wholesale. More than 300 booths were rented to Chinese businessmen. For this reason many people also refer to Emila as the "Chinese market".

The Emila event differs from previous confiscation cases towards Chinese. Usually the police or taxation departs have aimed at Chinese residential areas and small scale vendors, but this time the target was a large market. A report in *Elite Reference* indicated that this might be the result of competition to gain control over the market.

A Local Business

By Su Wei

Wuhu Construction and Investment, a state-owned company in Anhui Province, has experienced spectacular growth since it started in 1998. Then it was worth just 100 million yuan, and now it has assets worth 5.2 billion yuan. But there's another reason the company has been attracting attention from the nation's media. It's run by senior officials in the local government.

Wang Bin, vice general manager of the company, says this is an entirely reasonable route to success for a company.

Unfortunately, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party has long since made it clear that government officials should not have any connections with companies. Early last month, the Organization Department of the Central Committee issued a new national document saying that actions should be taken to clear up the practice of government officials taking positions in companies.

What's the big deal?

Ji Xingshan, deputy director of Wuhu Land Resources Bureau, also the vice general manager of Wuhu Construction and Investment, says he feels there's nothing strange in people calling him by either of his titles.

Wang Bin, vice director of Wuhu Finance Bureau, has business cards with the title of vice general manager of Wuhu Construction and Investment printed next to that of his official rank. He says he can use the same card when he attends the company's business negotiations.

The former vice mayor of Wuhu is the chairman of the board of directors of the company and directors and vice directors of the Wuhu Finance and Land Resources Bureaus are general and vice general managers of the company.

"It is regarded as a status symbol in Wuhu for government officials to have positions in companies," stated a recent Xinhua report.

Zhan Xialai, Secretary of the Party Committee of Wuhu is the chairman of SAIC Chery Automobile, a company with annual production capacity of 1.5 mil-

lion cars. Last summer the Organization Department of the Central Committee investigated Zhan having a position in the automobile company but no further information has yet been made available. Meanwhile, the company continues its roaring trade. At the end of last week, the company gave 600 cars for official use at the coming National People's Congress.

Xinhua reported early this month that a number of government officials in districts and towns of Wuhu such as Daqiao, Guandou and Wanli have their own construction and investment companies, with chiefs in these districts and towns being company chairmen. "Even villages in Wanli have capital management companies with the Party secretaries of villages being companies' chairmen," the report said. "It has become a widespread phenomenon and an established system in Wuhu for government officials to have positions in companies."

A member of staff from the Organization Department of Anhui, responsible for cracking down on governmental officials taking positions in companies, told *Beijing Today* that he doubted the Xinhua report's veracity. "I do not think the situation in Anhui is so severe. In fact we have been dealing with the problem since the end of last November," he said, refusing to give his name. "We are certain to finish our work before the end of April, a deadline set by the central government."

Career move

The 33 staff of Wuhu Construction and Investment are all drawn from local planning, construction, economic and trading committees, auditing and supervision bureaus, and finance and land resources bureaus.

Zhao Wei was promoted to department chief of Wuhu Finance Bureau after becoming director of the resources development department of the company. He was a vice chief before. "I need to learn to manage my time and energy, especially when one job needs more time than the other," he said.

"Local people call the company the cradle of the government officials," Xinhua said. "The government of Wuhu treats its officials having positions in companies as a grass-roots practice, helping to further these of-



The smiling face of local Wuhu business

Photo by Photocom

ficials qualifications."

Really a problem?

"The assurance of government credit, assets and land resources enable the company to collect funds through a variety of channels; the monopoly of resources and persistence of market direction also bring enormous social and economic benefits," said vice general manager Wang Bin. "All the returns from company operation are put into the infrastructure construction of the city," he insisted. "It is consistent with Party policies. Monopoly brings about benefits and efficiency."

Wang says that the costs of Wuhu Construction and Investment are very low thanks to the lack of extra labor costs. "Since staff of the company are gov-

ernment officials, there's no extra wage payment," he adds.

Expenses on social activities used for business negotiations can run a little high, and this cost is borne by the local taxpayer. But as Wang explained, these are diligently recorded as financing and accounting costs. "And they're necessary costs," he added.

One official quoted by Xinhua said it seemed that senior officials in Wuhu were not aware of the central government crackdown on government officials having positions in companies.

An article in this Monday's *Beijing Youth Daily* commented on the double role of people in government and companies. "Some government officials with

positions in companies may get nothing from their double role while they are in power, but what about when they retire from political positions?"

The article argued that the prosperity of some companies in Wuhu does not indicate general local prosperity. "Taking the development of the SAIC Chery Automobile as an example, taxis of other car brands from other areas are unable to enter the Wuhu market due to the monopoly of Chery cars," it said. "The economy in Wuhu is, in fact, decided and confined by monopoly and local protection. There is no real market competition. The fast development of a small number of enterprises is achieved at the expense of other enterprises."

By Philomena Cho

Teahouse entrepreneur, art events planner, furniture and ceramics designer, manager, handicrafts association founder, book publisher, local philanthropist; these are just some of the many hats that the 39-year-old Chen Yuecheng wears. Although unrelated at first glance, Huizhou-native Chen's many roles all stem from his firmly held conviction about Chinese culture.

"We're passing the phase of numbed consumption and moving into the phase of raising our quality of life," Chen explains. "The phenomenon in today's China of just importing chunks of western things is a very short-term development. Ultimately, any viable long-term development is about revitalizing our own cultural roots. While the world may be shrinking and becoming the same economically, that's never going to happen culturally. Only cultures that retain their uniqueness will survive so the essence of a culture will never globalize."

Teahouse entrepreneur

For Chen, serving tea is just a small part of his teahouse philosophy. "It's about the continued development of a cultured life. It's not that people don't care, it's that they can't imagine what a cultured life looks like or what this means. That's why I pay so much attention to the details. It's a picture of how life can be lived," he explains.

Chen opened his sixth teahouse in October last year. It's the first one he opened in Beijing and is located just south of the Yonghegong Lamasery. Chen's network of elegantly designed, calligraphy-filled teahouses now spreads from Shenzhen to Huizhou, and from Hunan to Shandong.

Chen personally travels to tea hills to purchase tea. One special tea is the Fujian Buddha-hand tea (*fo shou cha*), which is soaked in winter honey for a year and brewed directly from this wet mixture. In addition to a selection of over 20 teas ranging from 20 yuan to thousands of yuan, customers can also sample half a dozen traditional Hakka (Chen's nationality) steamed dishes, combining rice, vegetables and meat or fish.

Chen's next teahouses in Shandong and Xi'an will be located in five star hotels. "Everyone has a coffee shop, that's hardly unique. An upscale teahouse is a way to let people enjoy traditional Chinese culture in an approachable way that is still in good taste," says Chen. "You should have seen the look on the faces of the hotel staff when we first brought in the furniture, they couldn't imagine what the final result was going to look like. In the end, we won them over and they commissioned another teahouse."

The typical customer at Chen's teahouses is very similar to Chen himself: white collar professionals, aged between 30 and 40. "Of the 2,000 members we have now, 90% were born in the '60s and '70s. The older generation has different ideas about discretionary spending while the younger ones probably can't afford to come on a regular basis yet," he says.

The arts

Chen feels his passion for the arts comes partly from his generation. "I was born in the 1960s. People of this generation don't just want a materially comfortable life, they're aiming for something higher, a spiritual or cultural yearning that isn't being met," he adds.

Chen founded an arts company at the same time his first teahouse opened. "Originally, I wanted to open a gallery for traditional Chinese painting. The space I rented first in Shenzhen was 400 square meters, a bit large so we served tea as well to fully utilize that space. It was my first foray into business, so we were pretty naive. We just thought it would be fun though everyone else thought we were crazy."

The teahouse ended up



An upscale teahouse is a way to let people enjoy traditional Chinese culture in an approachable way that is still in good taste," says Chen Yuecheng from the comfort of his local establishment.



Chen prints the name of his new teahouse in Beijing.

thriving while the gallery closed its doors soon after. As to the popularity of tea compared to the arts, Chen says, "To me, the idea of enjoying tea in a relaxed environment is part of the same civility as enjoying art. The difference is that tea is something that most people have been able to enjoy while art is still considered by most people to be far away from daily life, maybe due to its tradition of royal or noble patronage."

Chen also has a clear philosophy about the arts. "The last show we did here, with Yu Peng from Taiwan, is very much in line with my general philosophy about bringing culture into daily life," he says. "Instead of just hanging up a few of his works, he completely reconfigured the teahouse space. He brought in furniture which he made himself, as well as vases and pots that he crafted and even brought in a floral expert to create all the flower arrangements for the show. So it was a complete aesthetic vision,

not just a painting on a wall," Chen says.

The next exhibition in May will feature a private collection of over 1,000 antique lamps. After that, Chen says, "I'm considering an exhibition on Miao minority tribe embroidery. The arts in my teahouses are more about sharing the exquisite arts and crafts I've discovered but which have no other venue for display."

Designer and manager

Not content to just invite artists and designers, Chen has a creative bent himself. Chen designed the coffee tables, tea ware and chairs in all the teahouses, and then had them manufactured in Shenzhen. It's given a recognizable look to his businesses.

Chen's love of travel gives him ample opportunity to pick up interesting antiques he finds along the way and incorporating them into his teahouses, which he also designs himself.

Staff development is also important to Chen. "It's not just about teaching someone how to make tea correctly, which is actually pretty simple," he says. "It's getting them to understand the whole teahouse ambience: everything from the utensils and tea ware, the placement of furniture, the music and the flower arrangement. Each person then brings this multi-dimensional understanding into the making of tea. This takes much longer, sometimes over a year. We have a special training department so that the standards are kept up," he adds.

But there is a risk of cultural overload. "Though I don't know much about music, I don't agree that traditional music should be played in teahouses. With both the atmosphere and the music being so traditional, the result can be too oppressive," says Chen.

Handicrafts

Lately, Chen's been spending most of his time organizing The Arts & Handicrafts 10,000 Years, a traditional arts seminar that will kick off with 11 international speakers talking about jade, bronze, ceramic and porcelain. The project will continue in 2005 with the invitation of product designers from around the world to work with traditional artisans to generate new products. As vice-president and general secretary

of the China Arts & Handicrafts Association, which he co-founded last year, Chen believes that everyone can take a hand in giving traditional arts a viable future.

The association doesn't have any government funding, so as Chen says, "It's up to us to find out how to organize ourselves. We want to see what we can do to help the traditional arts find a way forward and this is the first big event since we began. It's not about preserving, it's about being practical. This is about using contemporary tools so the traditional arts and crafts can thrive and artisans have a chance to make a decent living. In China, we don't lack the skills," Chen says, "we lack the design know-how."

Publisher

Another of Chen's many roles is that of publisher and he is set to release his first book in June this year. Written by a top academic, it's about Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) flower-arranging, tracing its history, how it went to Japan and continued to develop. The book launch will coincide with flower arranging classes to be held at the teahouse in Beijing starting in March.

Chen's also arranged classes at the teahouse for children to read the ancient literary classics *Four Books and Five Classics (Si Shu Wu Jing)* which will start next month. Chen will provide the textbooks and the weekend classes will be taught for free by a friend who has been teaching the classics for years. "We estimate it will take about six months for the kids to finish the basic texts. Of course we'd like to be able to offer it free to everyone, but for the program to expand we'll probably have to ask parents to kick in the book fees at some point so that the program can benefit more kids," says Chen.

In between juggling his many concerns, Chen still manages to sleep eight hours a night and enjoy his life. "I'm not a specialist in any of these areas, so there's always so much for me to learn," he admits. "My primary interest was to create an atmosphere I could relax in while earning a living, a way to find more time for myself. It's the perfect way to combine my many interests and still have time to do what I love: enjoy life!"



A classy kind of place

Photos by Li Yuxiang / Philomena Cho



Yang Luoshu, named a Folk Art Master by UNESCO in 2002, with a new print from a wood block carved in 1952.



Door God from Zhu Xianzhen, Henan.



A typical auspicious image from Fengxiang, Shaanxi. Photos by Photocom

Rebirth of Spring Festival Painting

Spring Festival Paintings (nianhua) are one of the most popular examples Chinese folk art. All over the country, people share the custom of hanging new paintings for the Spring Festival.

While in recent times nianhua have come to serve a primarily decorative function, the tradition has its roots in ancient religious beliefs related to protecting the home from evil spirits. The most common subjects are statues of gods (such as the Kitchen God), landscapes, social activities, historical stories, fairy tales and auspicious images.

Historical records show that nianhua probably originated in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and became popular in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) with the

invention of wood-block printing. By the Kangxi-Qianlong period (1662-1795) of the Qing Dynasty, nianhua had become a fully evolved art form with distinctive provincial schools and numerous centers of production.

The best known of these were Taohuawu in Suzhou; Yangliuqing in Tianjin; Yangjiabu in Weifang, Shandong; Zhuxianzhen in Henan; Wuqiang in Hebei; Jinnan in Shanxi; Fengxiang in Shaanxi; Mianzhu and Jiajiang in Sichuan; Fuyang in Anhui, Zhangzhou in Fujian, Foshan in Guangdong and Tantou in Hunan. Due to the dramatic social changes that followed the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the art of making nianhua fell into a decline from which it has never fully recovered.

By Iris Miao

After its first year of solid work, the Chinese Folk Art Heritage Rescue Project has finished a comprehensive survey of Spring Festival Painting, or *nianhua* in 21 places of production in 12 provinces.

The survey is the first work carried out by the project, which was launched in February last year, and a number of nianhua museums and research organizations have already been established as a result of the work.

"It is fair to say that the rescue of nianhua has entered a phase of harvest," vice director of the Chinese Folk Art Heritage Rescue Project office Wang Jinqiang told *Beijing Today* Monday, "but it's not yet time to relax, the situation is still severe."

When asked why the project made nianhua the first priority among traditional folk arts for rescue, Wang answered that as a representative of a popular folk custom, the disappearance of nianhua reflects the changes in people's lifestyles.

In many homes nowadays, calendars and posters of pretty girls and scenery have taken the place of door guardians and the Kitchen God. With the increasing popularity of western-style paintings and the rapid development of modern printing techniques, the market for traditional wood-cut nianhua has shrunk drastically.

Meanwhile as nianhua artists are getting older, and with no new apprentices coming into the trade, some nianhua schools have already vanished into history. "Therefore," said Wang, "it is a matter of urgency that we take immediate protective action."

In fact, nianhua have a high value for both collectors and historians. They serve as a record of the lives of ordinary people throughout the dynasties.

Many of the most exquisite examples of nianhua are rarely seen in China, yet they are abundant in museums and in private collections in Russia, Japan, Czech, Poland, Germany and the UK. Russia is described by some aficionados as the "back garden" of Chinese nianhua. The Oriental Museum of St. Petersburg and the Pushkin Museum in Moscow both have rich collections. "There are only 10,000 examples of nianhua collected in Chinese

museums. Oversea collections of nianhua are much more abundant, in Russia alone there are over 8,000 pieces collected in museums and galleries," says Wang.

However, there is some good news. With an initial starting fund of 300,000 yuan, the project was able to organize a series of activities in 21 main centers of production in 12 provinces, including the sorting of over 10,000 pieces from around the country, the establishment of museums in Wuqiang, Mianzhu, Yangliuqing and Zhuxianzhen.

Production methods in different places have been recorded by way of video, photography and interviews. "We were constantly taken aback during the process of the survey," Wang said, "it is amazing how elaborate and magnificent this particular folk art form can be, I saw one map of China made during the Qing Dynasty, approximately 4 by 6 meters. It was so delicate in all its details, the mountains, rivers, ... just fabulous! It's an embarrassment that we actually don't know enough about nianhua."

With the efforts of the project together with assistance from some local governments, the market for nianhua is seeing something of a revival as well. One of the most famous places of production, Yangliuqing, increased its yearly sales volume to seven million yuan in 2003, and Yangjiabu in Weifang is doing even better, with a total sales volume of 30 million yuan last year. "Many of the famous artisans have started signing their works, like 76-year-old Yang Luoshu at Yangjiabu, who was awarded the title Folk Art Master by UNESCO in 2002. Signing each of his woodblocks has made him a 'brand name' in the business, which has brought him not only greater recognition, but also much more tangible profits than other artisans," notes Wang.

The celebrated Russian sinologist Boris Riftin, who is also a specialist on Chinese nianhua, has been invited by the Chinese Folk Artists Association, initiator of the rescue project, to compile an album of nianhua in overseas collections. Meanwhile a series of books about the current status of nianhua, each focusing on a specific place of production, will be finished by the end of the year.

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Harris Named First Foreign Coach of National Basketball Team

By Zhang Bo

Dallas Mavericks defensive coordinator Del Harris was named head coach of the Chinese national basketball team at a news conference held by the China Basketball Association (CBA) last Friday. Harris is the first foreign head coach to take charge over this country's national basketball squad.

Jonas Kazlauskas, former head coach of the Lithuanian national team, and two

Chinese coaches, Min Lulei and Adijiang, were appointed as Harris' assistants. The national team's previous head coach, Jiang Xingquan, is expected to stay on as a technical consultant.

At the press conference, CBA Vice Chairman Hu Jiashi revealed that Kazlauskas, who was temporarily standing in as national team executive coach, had left for the US to meet with Harris. The Chinese team is scheduled to start its preparations for the upcoming Athens Olympic Games in mid-March.

Harris is under contract to lead the national squad through the end of the 2004 Olympics, and the CBA will use the team's performance as the major factor in deciding whether to continue cooperation with the American coach. According to Hu, the team's goal in Athens is finish among the top eight.

The CBA started an exhaustive search for a foreign head coach following the national basketball team's surprising loss to South Korea at the 2002 Asian Games in Busan.

While Hu did not disclose how much Harris would be paid for the coaching job, he did dismiss some domestic media rumors that the figure was \$1.5 million for this year.

Some foreign media reported on Harris' appointment before it was made official by the CBA. An Associated Press report of last Friday quoted Harris as saying, "It's an honor. The people of China are looking at this as a very significant, landmark event. It is important for sports, but it is also symbolic of the new, open China that they want to put forward to the world."

The Maverick's assistant coach added that his many years of NBA coaching as well as his international experience gave him an edge over other candidates for the top basketball job in China.

On Sunday, CBA general secretary Li Yuanwei told Xinhua that the main purpose of appointing a foreign coach was to overcome significant gaps in the team's training methods, tactics and game theory, as well as to lead the team to become a true contender in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The Chinese team won the only ticket to an appear-

ance at the Athens Games when they took the title at the Asian Basketball Championships last September, under the leadership of Jiang Xingquan. Hu Jiashi told the press last Friday that Jiang had pledged his full support of Harris.

Chinese superstar Yao Ming, all-star center for the NBA's Houston Rockets, has come out as another of Harris' strong supporters. According to a report from the Associate Press last Friday, Rockets President Carroll Dawson told Harris that Yao was so excited about the appointment that he could hardly sleep.

At the same time, Yao seems to be calling for reasonable expectations of the new coach. He told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday that the CBA should not put too much emphasis on the team's performance in the immediate future, especially at the Athens Olympics, and instead focus on long-term development and learning tactics and training methods from the experienced foreign coaches.

Despite such reasoned support, the road before Harris is not without its obstacles. Wang Fei, former head coach of the Chinese team, has said that both Harris and Kazlauskas know little about Chinese basketball and domestic players, most of whom cannot speak English. Establishing effective means of communication between coaches and players could be a big problem, Wang was quoted as saying in a report on Sohu.com on Sunday.

Another issue that could prove sticky is the ongoing controversy surrounding Miami Heat center Wang Zhizhi. The Chinese player has been embroiled in constant conflict with the CBA since he refused to join the Chinese national team at the 2001 World Championships. This issue is likely to come to a head in the near future, as in an interview with Beijing-based *Star Daily* on Tuesday, Wang explicitly said that he hoped to return to the national team now that Harris has the helm.

The CBA issued a statement at the press conference that the league, not Wang himself, had the right to decide on whether he could return.

According to a story in Shenyang-based *Balls Weekly* on Monday, Coach Harris said he would respect the CBA's attitude on the Wang Zhizhi issue. He added that Wang would be a valuable addition to the team, but insisted that the estranged star apologize to the CBA if he was serious about returning to national play.

Photo by Photocom

IOC Praises Beijing's Olympic Venue Construction

A top inspector from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Monday that Beijing has done a "perfect" job in constructing venues for the 2008 Olympic Games.

"We're extremely pleased to see how fast the work has been advanced," said Hein Verbruggen, chairman of the IOC's Coordination Commission for the 2008 Olympic Games.

Verbruggen made the remarks after an inspection tour of the construction site of the National Stadium and the National Swimming Center, two major venues for the 2008 Games, in north Beijing.

Beijing kicked off construction of the National Stadium and the National Swimming Center last December, and also broke ground for the shooting range and cycling velodrome.

The Chinese capital has promised to finish construction of its sporting facilities for the 2008 Games at least a year ahead of time so test events could be held during 2007.

"We're very sure that, as has been promised by BOCOG, the work will be finished by the end of 2006," said Verbruggen. "I don't think there's ever been a Games with construction ready so early."

(People Daily)

Capital to Hold Olympic Festival, Mascot Search Set

By Wesley Lei

Last Sunday, a senior official from the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) announced that this city would hold its second Olympic Cultural Festival from June 23 to July 13 this year.

"The theme of this year's Olympic Cultural Festival is 'Sports - Bridge of Culture and Friendship Linking East and West'," BOCOG Vice President Jiang Xiaoyu said. The festival will feature exhibitions and forums on the Olympic Movement and a series of large activities around the city.

Jiang also said that BOCOG was set to launch a global search for the mascot design for the 2008 Olympics. "The mascot should be a symbol of China easily acceptable to the rest of the world," he said.

The first Olympic Cultural Festival was held last September and the annual events will continue to be held in the four-year run-up to the 2008 Olympics.

Highlights of Del Harris' Career

Del Harris, 66, has served as defensive coordinator of the Dallas Mavericks since the spring of 2002. He has worked as head coach for 13 of his 17 years in the NBA and was just the 20th coach in league history to amass 500 wins. His career record as head coach is 556-457 with three teams, the Houston Rockets, Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers.

Harris started as an assistant coach with the Rockets in 1976 and was promoted to head coach in 1979. Two years later, he led the team to an appearance in the NBA finals. Harris is widely considered to have been instrumental in Hakeem Olajuwon's rise to superstardom.

At Milwaukee, Harris took the Bucks to four consecutive playoff appearances. He joined the Lakers in 1994 and over the next three seasons led the team out of its early '90s slump, recording at least 50 victories each year and an impressive overall record of 218-110. In recognition of his steering the team to a dramatic turn-around, Harris was named NBA Coach of the Year in 1995.

Harris also brings extensive international experience to his new position. He has worked as a consultant to China's national basketball team and coached for seven years in Puerto Rico using his fluent Spanish. In 1998, Harris served as an assistant to US national team head coach Rudy Tomjanovich at the World Championship of Basketball in Athens, where the Americans ended up taking home the bronze medal.

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加裕華裝飾

ByWenlong/JoelKirkhart

Diners with a taste for spice are likely to be fans of Korean food. Korean cuisine has adapted to make very liberal use of chilies since they were introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century, and a heavy hit of heat is a major characteristic of good *kimchi*, the national dish of spicy pickles.

Such high levels of spice and seasoning are among the factors that clearly distinguish Korean food from both Japanese and Chinese cuisines, though their influence is evident. In general, Korean cooking uses less oil than in Chinese food and is more flavorful than lots of Japanese fare. For example, the Korean version of sashimi, or raw fish, is sliced thicker than its Japanese counterpart, spiced and normally eaten wrapped in lettuce leaves.

It is not surprising that fish and seafood are mainstays of the Korean diet, considering the whole of Korea is a peninsula jutting into the Pacific Ocean. Yet, aside from kimchi, what the cuisine is arguably best known is beef, in such popular forms as *bugolgi*, barbequed strips of beef, and *galbi*, short ribs.

Communal cooking, particularly in the form of hot pot or barbeque, is popular. For grilling, thin slices of meat are often marinated in a combination of the most common Korean seasonings, such as soy sauce, garlic, ginger, sesame oil and chili. Cooked pieces are dipped in a thin soy-based sauce, tucked into lettuce, and often dipped again in another sauce made of fermented soy beans (not unlike Japanese miso) called *doenjang*.

Meals are rounded out with rice, wheat, bean and potato-based pancakes, or noodles, served on their own, in large bowls of soup, or cold as an excellent summertime heat beater.



Pine nut porridge and bibimbap, rice with vegetables, egg and spicy sauce, at Alana

Hot and Pricey

By Joel Kirkhart

Sorabol is one of the best-known names in Korean food in the capital, but one dinner at the outlet in the Novotel Peace Hotel raised the simple question – is it worth the extra money? Based on that meal, the answer is yes and no.



Kalbi, beef short ribs, at Sorabol

The restaurant's decor is adequate but nor remarkable, and the menu offers a pretty standard set of options, though prices are surprising. A side order of lettuce and vegetables for wrapping for 20 yuan?

The specialty of the house is grilled meat, and when the meat hits the table, the high prices are a bit easier to swallow, as quality is unquestionable. The marinated short ribs (*kao niupaigu*, 75 yuan), often tough and stringy at



Prime rib eye (85 yuan) is among Sorabol's superior, expensive cuts of beef.

some cheaper joints, were sliced into two thick ribbons of meat, marinated and then seared, leaving the center a bit raw. They were tender with a good chewy bite and very tasty.

Another winner was the sliced streaky pork (*kao wuhuarou*, 60 yuan). The waitress grilled the fatty meat until crisp, then added some sliced kimchi and mixed it all together. The pork was rich but not salty and nicely complemented by a mix of light soy sauce and lemon juice.

The menu also includes a wide range of fish options as well as a smallish vegetable selection and plenty of noodles, pancakes and soups.

The spicy pork and kimchi soup (*paocaitang*) was OK, high on salt and low on spice, but not really remarkable enough to justify its 45 yuan price tag – like many of Sorabol's other non-meat options.

Where: First floor, Novotel Peace Hotel, 3 Jinyu Hutong, Wangfujing, Dongcheng **Open:** 11 am – 2:30 pm, 5-10 pm **Tel:** 6512 8833 ext. 5712 **Average cost:** 150 yuan per person (not including drinks)

How Much Is That Doggy in the Window?

By James Liu

The Alana Korean Restaurant is hardly the most famous Korean eatery in the city, but it does enjoy a quietly solid reputation among South Korean expats and Chinese in the know, such as ambassador to South Korea Li Bin.

Specialties of the house include dog meat, hot pot, grilled beef and noodles. "Though many Westerners object to the eating of dog meat, people that try dog are likely to get hooked," said

restaurant owner Yuan Huishan. "The dogs we use are not pets, they come from farms in the suburbs of Beijing," she explained, and said the dogs are treated better than widely believed.



The Korean take on steak tartare: shengban niuou

The restaurant upholds the culinary traditions of Yanji, a city in Jilin Province in which the majority of the population is of Korean ethnicity. Therefore, Alana's chefs do not remove the dogs' skin before boiling, as would be customary in Guizhou and other Chinese regions where canines are cooked.

"Dog meat contains less fat than pork and is relatively healthy. In his masterwork *Bencao Gangmu* (*Compendium of Materia Medica*), the traditional Chinese medicine expert Li Shizhen wrote that dog meat is good for helping weak people," Yuan told *Beijing Today*, pointing to a picture of the Ming-dynasty doctor hanging on the wall.

A regular dog hot pot large enough to feed two goes for just 40 yuan, and diners can order their favorite cuts of meat. "Leg meat is the most delicious, followed by ribs," Yuan recommended. Another unusual dish to try is pine nut porridge (*songzi zhou*, 20 yuan), believed to help restore and maintain stomach strength.

Add: 5A Niuwangmiao, Shunyuanli, Chaoyang **Open:** 24 hours **Tel:** 8451 8608 **Average cost:** 50 yuan per person

Ingredients:

- 500 g Chinese (Napa) cabbage
- 1 large carrot, peeled and sliced into very thin strips
- 200 g white Daikon radish, peeled and sliced into very thin strips
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tbsp honey
- 3 tbsp cider vinegar
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, minced
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 to 4 hot red peppers, dried, 2 inches long, split

Procedure:

Slice the cabbage lengthwise into quarters. Remove the tough core and cut quarters into pieces 3 centimeters long. Combine the cabbage, carrot and radish with the scallions, soy sauce and water. Cover loosely and let stand overnight. Drain liquid from the vegetables into a bowl. Add honey and vinegar to liquid and mix.

Recipe: Kimchi



Mix ginger, garlic and chilies with vegetables and pack into sterilized jars. Pour in liquid to cover, adding more water if needed.

Cover the jars loosely with lids and let sit at room temperature for three to five days to ferment. The liquid will bubble and the flavor will become sour.

Refrigerate jars for three to four days. When the cabbage turns translucent, it is ready.

Cheap Grills

By Sarah Bai

Most of this city's many Korean restaurants are pretty similar, offering grilled meat, a few fish and vegetable choices and free "appetizers" at mid- to low-end prices. From all outward appearances, Gaolicon Shaokaocheng near the Drum Tower should fall neatly into this group, yet it manages to stand out by providing a little something extra.

A meal at Gaolicon starts with six free small dishes, heavy on the pickled vegetables. More substantial starters are also available, such as *la niuou* (spicy beef, 15 yuan), a salad of cold beef slices with julienned cucumber and chili peppers with cilantro.



Modest Gaolicon stands about 75 meters east of the Drum Tower.

When the waitress brings over the grill, a metal box filled with hot coals and topped with a stainless steel grate, it's time to forget the pickles and get down to business. The real reason to go to Gaolicon is to gorge on meat,

Photos by Lou Ge / Joel Kirkhart

Watch it sizzle: grilled beef and pork at Gaolicon



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ISDN is available
Elevator: 10 KONE elevators HVAC System: Four-pipe system
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Existing Tenants: Walt Disney, BASY, KONE, E-turtle Next work

Tel: 85275696-608

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租售热线: Enquiry hotline: 65886868

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By Xiao Rong

The ninth China International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) kicked off last Saturday in Beijing, drawing participants representing around 240 educational institutions from 25 countries and regions.

This year, the six-year-old exhibition was renamed from its former moniker, the "China International Higher Education Exhibition Tour," in order to emphasize the wide range of foreign educational resources available to Chinese students.

"Because the event is aimed at providing all-around educational information to different groups of people pursuing further study abroad, we decided to rename it so that different levels of foreign educational institutions could have access to the exhibition," said Fang Maotian, director of the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE), a body under the Ministry of Education and the organizer of the event.

All the educational institutions that participated had official accreditation, according to Che Weimin, vice director of the CSCSE's international cooperation department.

In a departure from previous events, the CSCSE required exhibitors to list detailed introductory information such as their dates of establishment, website addresses, academic levels, major area of study and accreditation status.

"Even though we have set up strict qualification standards for exhibitors, applicants who want to study abroad still need to make careful choices, especially concerning teaching quality and the academic environment at these universities and schools," Che stressed.

The two-day exhibition also highlighted some vocational programs available to interested Chinese. Once such program that drew a lot of attention was the Higher National Diploma (HND), which the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) was promoting in China for the first time.

"The studying abroad business is like product manufacturing, in that it has to take the job market into consideration. No products will be made for markets in which there is no demand. Similarly, whether a certain area of professional study can lead to a good job is the crucial consideration of students seeking to study overseas," Shao Wei, CSCSE vice director, told *Beijing Today*.

One new addition to the exhibition's annual schedule was the two-day Studying Abroad and Diversification of

Education Exhibition Highlights Diversity of Choices



Visitors clustered outside the door to the ninth China International Education Exhibition Tour at the China World Trade Center on Saturday.

Human Resources Training Forum, which included promotions of British higher education programs, a workshop for study abroad agents and a seminar on quality assurance in Sino-foreign jointly operated programs.

The exhibition is scheduled to travel from Beijing to six other domestic cities, namely Xi'an, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Xiamen and Nanjing. The previous eight exhibitions organized by the CSCSE over the past six years drew over 600 foreign educational institutions from 30 countries and regions.

Hard Lessons Learned in Cooperative Courses

By Yu Shanshan

Cooperative educational programs run by Chinese schools and their foreign counterparts have developed quickly over the last 10 years or so in which Chinese educational institutions have been working with foreign counterparts to offer innovative courses, many problems have cropped up in the development of cooperative education.

Zhou Mansheng, deputy director-general of the Ministry of Education's National Center for Education Development Research told *Beijing Today* on Saturday that no one has addressed the country's need for a system to assure the quality of cooperative education programs, adding the Chinese government hoped to rely on professional consulting services to build a national accreditation system for these programs.

The diploma office under the State Council and the Ministry of Education currently oversee the accreditation of cooperative education programs.

Zhou made the statements last Saturday at the Quality Assurance of Sino-Foreign Jointly Operated Programs Seminar. He said that by the end of 2002 there were 712 Sino-foreign jointly-operated education

programs in China.

"To be honest, very few of these programs are of high-quality. Some have a very commercial feel, as if they are just ways of mining for gold to ship back home," Zhou said. "So guaranteeing program quality is the biggest issue confronting us."

Many problems in these programs result from differences between educational systems and cultures and gaps between foreign standards and practical needs in this country.

Zhang Wei, head of the Shanghai Normal University Science and Technology Management College (STMC), told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday in a telephone interview, "Chinese people and education authorities always think that the biggest problem in cooperative education is language. But I say that language is only a small part, and the biggest problem is our educational modes and methods."

His college was established in 1994 in collaboration with the UK's Staffordshire University. For the first ten years of their cooperation, the UK side was against conforming to the requirements of China's state-administrated higher education system, but agreed to make changes necessary to do so in September in order to promote the program's development.

Scots Introduce New Kind of Diploma

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Last Saturday's Sino-Scottish Education Event hosted by the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy marked the official opening of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) office at the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) in Beijing.

The event was held to celebrate the new cooperation between CSCSE and the SQA, who will work with Chinese higher educational institutions to issue the Higher National Diploma (HND) in China. It is the first time for such degrees, overseen by the SQA, to be made available in this country and the first time that a group of Scottish education authorities has come to China to promote their educational resources.

British Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Lewis MacDonald presented certificates to representatives of the 16 Chinese institutions approved to offer the HND in partnership with the SQA and the British Council, the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy.

The HND is a certificate recognized in the UK as a sign of completing a three-year course of professional study. The diplomas can be useful in finding jobs, or can pave the way to applying for undergraduate study in the UK, in which case holders only have to study one more year to earn their bachelor's degrees.

Courses of study available through the HND program include business, marketing, finance, management and manufacturing engineering. Because these courses are offered by the domestic partner institutions, annual tuition fees should range from 15,000 to 18,000 yuan per year, far lower than would be charged in Scotland.

"After conducting trials of the HND program around China over the past two years, we have found that the program is feasible in this country and therefore decided to formally introduce it to all Chinese students," Alastair MacGregor, China project manager under the SQA, told *Beijing Today*.

"The introduction of the HND program will help China with the reform of its vocational education system and we can learn a lot from the Scottish education structure," said Shao Wei, CSCSE deputy director general.



Lewis MacDonald hands a partnership certificate to Ms. Wang from the Beijing International Studies University. Photos by Li Shuzhuan

Overseas Study Agents Facing Extinction

By Zhang Ran

Despite the encouraging words keynote speech given at last Saturday's Second Agent Workshop at the China World Hotel, many overseas study agents have great doubts about the future of their industry. The main problem is that the increasing availability of information and other resources to help prospective students help themselves has rendered the once-crucial agents nearly obsolete.

In the keynote speech, Cen Jianjun, deputy director of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchange of the Ministry of Education (MOE), pointed out that the overseas study market is growing rapidly. He said that more than 700,000 Chinese have headed abroad to study since 1978, with 117,300 going overseas in 2003 alone. Of last year's crop, 93 percent paid for their education expenses on

their own.

However, the number of students heading abroad through agencies has not shown a concurrent rise. "We had 500 clients in 2002, but only 400 in 2003. This business is getting harder and harder," said Liu Yi, marketing manager at Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co., a local overseas study consulting firm.

The Internet is considered a main factor, as many students can now gather information about foreign universities and file applications themselves online. The ready availability of such resources may also explain why there was no obvious rise in the number of visitors at this year's event from last year's smaller session, as observed by Wang Xiping of the British Council.

"Overseas study agents, in my opinion, are doomed to die if they do not find new ways to survive," said Liu.

In the past, the overseas study agency market was very lucrative, as agents held effective monopolies over information about foreign education institutions and application procedures.

"To keep up, you must know what you are selling," Liu added. "The kind of people we can attract as clients are ones who want to go abroad but do not have time to take care of the whole application process. We can save them time and offer professional services."

Shang Rong, a 23-year-old student from Xi'an Structure and Technology University who has signed a contract with Jinjilie Overseas Study Agent, a local company, told *Beijing Today* she decided to leave the application process to the agent so she could devote herself to preparing for a difficult English language exam.

Liu's company has recently changed tactics to try to draw more students seeking to apply on

their own. Wiseway has opened an overseas study club to give self-motivated students a place to find and share information, attend related seminars and get access to free magazines and other materials, for a one-time membership fee of 199 yuan.

In his speech, Cen Jianjun vowed that the MOE would continue its efforts to organize the overseas study market. He noted that in 2003, the ministry forced the closure of many illegal agents while issuing a list of 270 qualified agents nationwide. The MOE has also been advocating for the establishment of an industry association and a standardized contract in the overseas study consulting field.

"We are looking forward to the birth of this kind of organization and contract. Standardized contracts have already been used in Shanghai since last year," said Maggie Li, manager of the Australia office from Chinavast Education International, an agency owned by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE).

Europe:

Copenhagen Business School

Address: Solbjerg Plads 3 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark

Telephone: +45 3815 3815

Website: www.cbs.dk

Email: cbs@cbs.dk

Recommend: China-Europe Education & Research Foundation (Cheer)

Comments: The largest business school in northern Europe, with 14,000 students and 770 permanent staff.

Delft University of Technology (TU Delft)

Address: P.O. Box 5, 2600 AA Delft, The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 15 2785441

Website: www.tudelft.nl

Email: j.f.vanlangeveld@tudelft.nl

Recommended majors: Engineering Sciences

Recommend: Netherlands Education Support Office (NESO)

Comments: The most comprehensive university courses in engineering sciences in the Netherlands. Covers all fields of engineering sciences and enjoys a reputation as the European Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dublin City University

Address: Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland

Telephone: +353 1 7005953

Website: www.dcu.ie

Email: chinadesk@dcu.ie

Recommend: Beijing JJJL Overseas Education Consulting and Service Co.

Comments: Employment statistics show DCU graduates consistently fare well above the national average for graduates from all third-level institutions.

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Address: Dublin Road, Dundalk, County Louth, Ireland

Telephone: +353 429370499

Website: www.dkit.ie

Email: Nicola.carroll@dkit.ie

Recommended majors: Business, Science,

Engineering, Computing and Hospitality

Recommend: Beijing JJJL Overseas

Education Consulting and Service Co.

Comments: Set in a state of the art campus with top quality facilities available to students such as the extensive library, free internet access, gymnasium, outdoor sports facilities and four restaurants.

Goethe Institute

Address: Dachauer Str. 122 D-80637

Muenchen, Germany (Zentrale Einschreibung)

Digital tower B17, Zhongguancun Nandajie 2,

Haidian District (Goethe Institute Beijing)

Telephone: +49 89 15921200 (ZE)

+86 10 82512909 (Beijing)

Website: www.goethede/deutschland

Email: esb@goethe.de (ZE)

Gipeksp@public.bta.net.cn (Beijing)

Recommend: Germany Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

Comments: The best language school in Germany

Hanze University Groningen

Address: P.O. Box 70030, The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 505952071

Website: www.hanze.nl

Email: f.cazemier@pl.hanze.nl

Recommended majors: Business,

Communication, Technique, Music, Arts, and Physiotherapy

Recommend: NESO

Comments: One of the oldest universities in Germany, offers a wide range of majors.

Marangoni School

Address: Maurizio Gonzaga, 6.20123 Milano Italy

Telephone: +39 02 86 46 35 55

Website: www.istitutomarangoni.com

Email: info@istitutomarangoni.com

Recommend: European School Federation

Comments: The first professional art school in Italy to be authorized by the Italian Ministry of Education. Over 80 percent of the employees at Versace and Prada are graduates of Marangoni School.

University of Stirling

Address: Stirling, FK9 4LA Scotland

Telephone: +44 1786 467046 +86 10 68946699

Website: www.stir.ac.uk

Email: international@stir.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Marketing, Media

Recommend: Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co.

Comments: Has the biggest marketing department, and is one of the research centers in the UK. Also offers a high quality program in the field of media study.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Address: City Campus Cowcaddens Road

Glasgow G4 0BA, Scotland

Telephone: +44 1413318675

Website: www.caledonian.ac.uk

Email: LmcQuire@gcal.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Business, Health,

Science and Technology

Recommend: Scottish Qualification

Authority (SQA)

Comments: One of the largest and most modern universities in Scotland.

Sheffield Hallam University



Address: Sheffield S1 1 WB UK

Telephone: +44 114 225 5555

+86 10 68946699

Website: www.shu.ac.uk

Email: j.h.parkinson@shu.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Hospitality

Management, Sports and Leisure

Management and MBA

Recommend: Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co.

Comments: A comprehensive university that offers over 400 subjects.

University of Bristol

Address: Bristol BS8 1LN, UK

Telephone: +44 117 954 5788

+86 10 68946699 (Beijing)

Website: www.bristol.ac.uk

Email: orlo@bristol.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Engineering,

Computing Science and Medicine

Recommend: Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co.

Comments: Ranked No. 4 in the Times 2003

overall ranking.

University of Exeter

Address: Exeter UK EX4 4QJ

Telephone: +44 1392 263040

+86 10 68946699 (Beijing)

Website: www.exeter.ac.uk

Email: intoff@exeter.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Finance, Law,

Computing, and Education

Recommend: Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co.

Comments: One of the best universities in

the UK, UE has a strong program covering

Finance, Law, Computing and Education.

The International Management program is

suitable for applicants without any education

background in business related courses.

University of Huddersfield

Address: Queensgate Huddersfield

HD1 3DH UK

Telephone: +0044 1484 472828

+86 10 68946699

Website: www.hud.ac.uk

Email: international.office@hud.ac.uk

Recommended majors: Computing, Logistics

and Hospitality Management

Recommend: Beijing Wiseway Consulting Co.

Comments: One of the best "New

Universities," with excellent teaching facilities

and accommodation.

University of Leipzig

Address: Goethestrasse 6 Leipzig Germany

Telephone: +49 341 9732053

Website: www.uni-leipzig.de

Email: zsb@rz.uni-leipzig.de

Policies Changes

Netherlands Changes Study Application Criteria

By Wang Xiaoxiao

During this year's CIEET, the Netherlands introduced its new policies regarding application criteria for Chinese who wish to study in the country.

The policy changes were announced and explained at the Second CIEET Agent Workshop on Saturday by Robert van Kan, managing director of the Netherlands Education Support Office (NESO), the representative office of the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education in China. He said that the criteria for applying to study at Dutch educational institutions were revised on February 1 this year, and under the new requirements, Chinese preparing to go to the Netherlands to study need to first register with NESO in Beijing for what is called a "Neso Certificate."

That document acts as confirmation that a given candidate has the English language proficiency and educational qualification necessary to gain admission to Dutch institutions of higher education. The overall process of applying to study in the Netherlands was revised in order to ensure all students heading to the country are qualified enough to make the most of their educational opportunities.

Following is a list of recommended foreign educational institutions from among the 240 exhibitors. The recommendations come mostly from overseas-study agencies, embassies, and other educational organizations. It is compiled as a reference for Chinese students seeking to study overseas and is not an official ranking.



Recommend: DAAD

Comments: Located in the beautiful city Leipzig and one of the best universities in Germany

Oceania

Auckland University of Technology

Address: Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1020, New Zealand

Telephone: +64 (9) 917 9999 9 (Akoranga

Campus)

+64 (9) 917 9999 (Wellesley Campus)

Website: www.aut.ac.nz

Email: international.centre@aut.ac.nz

Recommended majors: Business,

Computing, and Hotel Management

Recommend: Chivast Education

International

Manukau Institute of Technology

Address: Private Bag 94006, Manukau City, Auckland, New Zealand

Telephone: +64 9 968 8742

Website: www.manukau.ac.nz

Email: tricia.reade@manukau.ac.nz

Recommended majors: Visual Arts, Health

Science (Nursing), and Engineering

Technology

Recommend: Chivast Education

International

Comments: welcoming environment, attentive

staff, relevant programs.

North America:

Bond International College

Address: 5 Queenslea Avenue, Toronto, ON

Canada (Headquarter)

Q-218, Huiyuan Apt. Yayuncun (Beijing Office)

Telephone: +1 416 248 8191(Headquarter)

010-84973576/3568 (Beijing Office)

Website: www.bondcollege.com

Email: bondbjo@263.net

Recommend: Beijing JJJL Overseas

Education Consulting & Service Co.

Comments: Since 1978, thousands of

graduates have successfully gained admission

to some of the most prestigious universities in

Canada. Provides a full-range of services for

students, including residence, meals, tutoring,

excursions, physical activities, clubs and more.

University of Akron

Address: 259 S Broadway, Akron, Ohio US

Telephone: +1 330 972 7043

Website: www.uakron.edu/cba/iemba

Email: jdiovky@uakron.edu

Recommend: Chivast Education



Photos by Li Shuzhuan

International

Comments: A world leader in creating new materials for the new economy; a national leader in the development, protection, management and commercialization of intellectual property; and a regional leader in information technology initiatives. The only university in Ohio with a science and engineering program ranked among the top five nationally.

University of Northern Virginia

Address: 10021 Balls Ford Rd, Manassas,

Virginia, 20109 US

Telephone: +1 703 392 0771 (1 888 397 5700)

Website: www.unva.edu

Email: kenomoto.admin@unva.edu

Recommend: Chivast Education

International

Comments: A fully accredited higher learning

institution, and one of the 200 universities

among over 3,000 in the US to offer an

MBA course accredited by the USA MBA

Association.

Asia:

KDI School of Public Policy & Management

Address: P.O. Box 184, Cheong-nyang, Seoul,

South Korea

Telephone: 0082 2 3299 1039

Website: www.kdischool.ac.kr

Email: wpark@kdischool.ac.kr

admissions@kdischool.ac.kr

Recommended majors: Master of Public

Policy (MPP), Master of Business

Administration (MBA)

Recommend: ZM Culture and

Communication

Comments: An international graduate school

offering innovative educational programs in

public policy and business management. All

classes are conducted in English.

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

Address: 1-1 Jumonjibaru, Beppu, Oita, Japan

Telephone: +81 977 78 1119

Website: www.apu.ac.jp

Email: welcome@apu.ac.jp

Recommend: Chivast Education

International

Comments: The first university in Japan

to conduct bi-lingual classes (English and

Japanese). Half of the teaching staff are from

outside Japan, some of whom have been senior

management staff from multinationals. The

university also enjoys a high proportion of

employment for its graduates.

Edited by: Xiao Rong, Yu Shanshan, Wang Xiaoxiao, Zhang Ran

Kiwis Move to Insure Educational Safety

By Zhang Ran

Alistair Crozier, newly appointed education counselor to the New Zealand Embassy in China, announced on Saturday that his country would be going to greater efforts to guarantee the security of education for Chinese students. Crozier made the address in fluent Chinese during the CIEET's 2nd Agent Workshop.

Crozier said that his appointment represented a solid step on the part of New Zealand's Ministry of Education to boost Chinese students' confidence in education in that country. New Zealand has been struggling to attract foreign students this year due to rising exchange rates and the embarrassing bankruptcies of two prominent private schools, Modern Age and Carich, last year.

"More than 90 percent of Chinese students attending the two collapsed schools have been transferred to other institutions and can finish their studies at the new institutions. Most of them have been placed in equivalent courses," Crozier told *Beijing Today*.

"It's becoming very competitive at a time when New Zealand's image in the market has taken a bit of a hit," said Eva Song, marketing executive of New Zealand Institution of Commerce, a private educational institution. "We are diversifying our market to avoid being over-dependent on Chinese students. India, Japan and South Korea are our future marketing aims."

Movies



Nuan

Directed by Huo Jianqi, starring Teruyuki Kagawa, Li Jia. This film won the Best Film prize at the 16th International Film Festival in Tokyo last year. It's a romantic story of a young man returning from the big city to his small hometown where he meets his first love again. In Chinese.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** from February 27 **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 8211 2851

Mona Lisa Smile

Directed by Mike Newell, starring Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Julia Stiles and Maggie Gyllenhaal. This is the story of a free-spirited Berkeley graduate (Roberts) in 1953 who takes a position as a teacher at a women's college, Wellesley. At first impressed by her students, the teacher finds herself frustrated that the aspirations life has taught them to strive for are mostly to land a great husband, and not pursue the sort of occupations she knows they're capable of. In English.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** from February 27 **Admission:** 80 yuan **Tel:** 8211 2851

Fanfan La Tulipe

Directed by Gerard Krawczyk, starring Vincent Perez,

Penelope Cruz, Michel Muller, and Gilles Arbona. An 18th century swashbuckling swordsman, Fanfan La Tulipe, is tricked into joining the army of King Louis XV by a recruiting sergeant and his beautiful gypsy daughter who convinces him to join by predicting that if he does, he will eventually marry one of the king's daughters. In French with English subtitles.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** from February 27 **Admission:** 60 yuan **Tel:** 8211 2851



Jade Goddess Of Mercy (Yu Guan Yin)

Directed by Xu Anhua, starring Zhao Wei, Nicholas Tse, and Liu Yunlong. Adapted from Hai Yan's novel, An Xin works as a narcotics police officer in Yunnan Province. She falls in love with a drug dealer and has his child. In Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** February 27-28, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

Sports

A Walk Down the Incense Trail

This is a downhill trail. The scenery includes a temple on top of Miaofeng Mountain and another temple at the foot of the mountain: Dajuesi Temple.

Where: Mentougou District, west of Beijing **When:** February 29, 8:30 at the Lido Hotel outside Starbucks Café **Admission:** 150 yuan for adults and 100 yuan for Children **Tel:** 1391002 5516

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By Guo Yuandan

Jams

Bands

This night Convenience Store (Bianli Shangdian) will play music from their new album. On Saturday night CMCB, 2MC and China-four will perform.

Where: Get lucky, 1 Dongfang Qicai Dashijie, Laitai Jie Chaoyang **When:** 10 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335, 8448 3339

Mod Party

DJ Tony is just back from London with a new collection of LPs, and Vibes is hosting a Mod party for all your swinging' sixties needs.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu **When:** February 28, 10 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6437 8082

Exhibitions

A Woman's World

An exclusive exhibition featuring the work of 11 female artists. The works try to show women's varying perspectives on the world. The works include oil paintings, sculptures and collages.

Where: China Art Seasons Gallery, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu **When:** March 6 – April 15, 11 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6431 1900



Nepal Through a Lens

A Photo Exhibition, organized by Nepal Tourism Board, under the theme 'Many Faces of Nepal' is being held at Swissotel to promote the country's tourism in China. Now Chinese tourists to Nepal are provided with a free visa on their arrival.

Where: Hobby Gallery, 2nd floor, Swissotel, 2 Chaoyangmen Beidajie, Dongcheng **When:** February 27-29 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6553 2288



Music

London Calling

The acclaimed London Symphony Orchestra is to perform in Beijing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the famous Rolls-Royce car company.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **Admission:** 600-2,800 yuan **When:** March 6, 7:30 pm **Tel:** 6506 5345

Peress Performs

Maurice Peress from the United States will conduct the China National Symphony Orchestra.

A famous conductor, Peress has worked with the New York Philharmonic, Vienna Opera and Hong Kong Philharmonic amongst others. The Programs include the *Egmont* Overture by Beethoven, Piano Concerto No 1 by Brahms, and Symphony No 4 by Schumann.

Where: China National Library Concert Hall, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian **When:** March 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50-380 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5501

Rare Rubbings

This year-round exhibition is displaying book rubbings of ancient calligraphy masterpieces. The exhibits contain examples of handwriting of outstanding calligraphers for learners to copy. The 30-odd rare pieces on display come from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Where: the National Library of China, 33 Zhongguancun Nandajie **When:** 9 am - 4 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8854 4114

Body Beautiful

A scientific exhibition displaying preserved human body tissue is underway. The exhibits include six specimens of complete human bodies, processed using special technology to replace the water and fat contained in the body into synthetic resin

to preserve the original appearance. The display also shows the changes that take place in people's bodies.

Where: Beijing Natural History Museum, 126 Tianqiao Nandajie **When:** till March 31, 9 am – 5 pm **Admission:** 15 yuan **Tel:** 6702 4431

Gerhard Richter 'Survey' Art Exhibition

Richter was born in Dresden, Germany in 1932. Richter is ranked among Germany's most famous artists, alongside the likes of Sigmar Polke and Georg Baselitz. The exhibition features 27 works and offers an insight into all of Richter's main creative phrases.

Where: Creation Gallery, North end of Ritan Donglu **When:** till February 29, 10 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570

Activities

One Day Trip to Tianjin – Chinese Cultural Club

A tour of downtown Tianjin, a seaport city with many western colonial buildings and churches. As well as a trip to Food and Cultural Street there's a drive to Yangliuqing County to see the workshops of the famous New Year paintings.

Where: catch the bus at the Dirty Nellie's Irish Pub, Liangma River, across the river from the Kempinski Hotel **When:** February 29, 8:30-18:00 **Admission:** 150 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081

YPPH Goes Skiing at Nanshan

At Nanshan we have already arranged rental of skis/snowboards, boots and suits (if necessary). Last descent at around 4 pm. At 5 pm we invite you to Schiller's Steakhouse for an all-you-can-eat dinner buffet including a free flow of draft beer or soft drinks.

Where: Nanshan, Miyun county **When:** February 28, catch the bus at 7 am at the Worker's Stadium **Admission:** 450 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1412

Stage

Boeing, Boeing

This comedy drama features Chinese film star Zhu Shimao. The comedy tells how a Hong Kong engineer wins the love of three "fiancées" who are all air stewardesses flying different routes. His three fiancées are all pretty and lovable, and fortunately for him, know little of the other women in his life. But what happens when all three air stewardesses happen to arrive at their boyfriend's home at the same time.

Where: Grand Chang'an Theater, Jiangguomennei Dajie **When:** March 5-9, 11-17, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-880 yuan **Tel:** 6510 1155

Language Exchange

Yi Yi, a Beijing girl, is a college student. She wants to find a foreigner for language exchange.

Email: ugos@sina.com

Lindea wants to find a native English speaker willing to teach her English.

Email: feminle@yahoo.com.cn

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Qingdao – History Written in Stone

Zhan Qiao(pier), with the new town in the background.

By Bruce Connolly/Huang Yanan

A city's architecture is almost like a history book written in stone. If they have survived the ravages of time then buildings, when examined carefully, represent episodes in a story. Today, the legacy in some Chinese cities often remains only as names, such as the long-gone gates of Beijing's city wall, remembered by the suffix *men*.

There still are, however, many places where existing architecture reveals much about the past. Sometimes, such as in towns like Lijiang in Yunnan or Pingyao in Shanxi, the story goes back centuries, with very little outside interference. In contrast, Shanghai and Tianjin have streetscapes where various western architectural styles are testimony to early 20th century intervention in China.

Today only a few places show the distinct imprint of one particular foreign power. Macao, for example, has a definite Portuguese or Mediterranean feel. Another example is the architectural treasure of Qingdao. Although its modern areas represent some of China's finest achievements in town planning and environmental management, a large section of the Old City quite simply looks like a small piece of Germany grafted onto a series of hills overlooking the Yellow Sea.



Mingshui Lu, a street in the Old Town

Ironically the Germans were not in Qingdao very long, but their influence extends well beyond buildings. Internationally famous Tsingtao Beer started its life as a small brewery serving the needs of the beer-loving German community.

In the latter years of the 19th century many foreign powers were attempting to extend their influence overseas, particularly in Asia. As travel at that time was mostly by sea, good coastal ports were much sought after. Qingdao, on the southern side of the

greater Shandong Peninsula and looking out towards the Yellow Sea, is a natural harbor that is also ice-free.

In 1898, the Manchu government, under pressure, ceded the Jiaozhou Peninsula that included the then small city of Qingdao to Germany for 99 years. However, during the First World War the Japanese moved in, replacing the Germans. The Treaty of Versailles strengthened Japan's occupation in 1919. The anger in China at this decision led to many demonstrations and ultimately the patriotic May 4th Movement.

Today a great red monument rising from a square overlooking the sea commemorates this event and has become the symbol of modern Qingdao. Although the city and surrounding area was ceded back to China in 1922 it fell again into Japanese hands in 1938 before finally returning to China in 1949.

These events have left their mark on the city's architecture. The Germans, wanting access to the interior of the Shandong Peninsula, built a railway from the coast to Ji'nan. This became a focus for protest by locals upset at the disturbance to the region's *fengshui*. Qingdao's original 1901 station building, constructed in European style with a tall clock tower, can still be seen. Carefully maintained, it has been incorporated into the city's modern railway terminus a few minutes walk from the coastal promenade.



Qingdao Railway Station

Across from the station, an ornate yellow building with a gold domed roof and windows outlined in white is actually the former station restaurant.

Walking east along the seafront, one encounters many substantial early 20th century buildings, some transformed into fashionable hotels. Considerable effort has been made in landscaping this area with its bathing beach and many pavement cafes providing pleasant summer evening relaxation

Stretching out to sea is a 440 meter long pier, called Zhan Qiao. Built at the end of the 19th century it leads to the octagonal Huilan Pavilion. Today that building is internationally recognized as the symbol for Tsingtao Beer. Across the bay, another long pier leads to Little Qingdao Island with its German-built lighthouse. This island protected the original naval base, which today is the Navy Museum and final resting place of the retired 1941 warship, the Anshan.

A garden-like street leads from the sea front up to the former government center, or town hall, on Yishu Road. In 1906, the Germans erected a substantial two story light stone building in the form of a quadrangle with a vehicle ramp rising up to the main entrance. This style is found in many European cities. There the governor and his team of civil servants administered the town. Long after the Germans departed, the building continued its administrative function until the city authorities moved into a modern complex in the new city.



Municipal offices

The governor and his family lived in a quite substantial, indeed palatial structure on Longshan Hill, to the east of the city hall. Built in 1908 in classical German style, it overlooks the tiled rooftops towards the harbor. So shocked was Kaiser Wilhelm when he heard the cost of the building, he recalled the governor in disgrace.

Many of the German residents of Qingdao were Lutherans, and in 1908 they built a church on a hill above what is now Jiangsu Road in

a style suggesting the medieval architecture of their homeland. Its green-domed tower, which visitors can climb, still contains the original clock and timing mechanism brought from Germany. The surrounding courtyard overlooks an extraordinary collection of European domestic architecture – the former homes of many senior administrators and military personnel.

In contrast to the church, the yellow stone catholic cathedral of St Michael's is much more ornate. Replicating a style found throughout much of Western Europe, its twin red-tiled spires rise above an arched main entrance with finely carved stonework. In the adjoining grounds entered through a wrought-iron gate, a statue of the Virgin Mary stands on a pedestal.

Inside the great white-painted main hall illuminated through stained-glass windows, the walls are adorned with murals depicting scenes from the life of Christ. At the sanctuary, from where the priest leads the service, the Latin words 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' appears beneath a domed blue and gold ceiling bearing scenes of celestial heavenly visions.

Surrounding buildings related to the cathedral, such as St Michael's Gallery, are also architectural wonders transferred from distant lands. Indeed the upper roof and window design of some



St. Michael's Cathedral

buildings seem 18th century French in inspiration.

Walking through this area of tranquil tree-lined cobbled streets the impression repeatedly is of a small European town. Homes,

protected behind walls, differ in individual styles with their woodwork and stone carved balconies but they do have homogeneity as to their origin. It is an architectural treasure trove that thankfully is being protected, and indeed being carefully restored.

The Japanese have also left their imprint, although on not so grand a scale as the Germans. Around the Old Town's Zhongshan Lu, many buildings displaying a fairly uniform style from the 1920s were offices, shops and dormitories. This street leads to the former financial district along Guantao Road. There, foreign banks and commercial concerns set up offices.

Many of these structures were constructed in classical styles incorporating grand columns. Today some are mere shadows of their previous glory, while others have been transformed into new use. The early 20th century solid stone building that formerly housed British Chartered Bank is now a very fashionable western restaurant.

Another fascinating area to explore is located between the older and new sections of the city. A rocky headland jutting into Taiping Bay is criss-crossed by quiet tree-lined avenues containing over 200 stylish villas, many of which date



Huashi Lou (Granite Castle)

from the 1930's. Once summer dwellings of the rich and famous, some later became sanatoriums, state guesthouses and retirement homes. Above a path that follows the seafront sits the area's most striking building, the Granite Castle (Huashi Lou). Built originally by a Russian aristocrat, this structure of heavy stone blocks could easily be in Scotland!

Nearby is another area also

great for walking, Taiping Gongyuan. In this forested park is the comparatively young Zhanshan Temple. Built in 1945, it belongs to the Tiantai Buddhist Sect. Famed for its many Buddha figurines carved from sandalwood and wrapped in gold foil, the temple sits below an ornate gray pagoda.

Beyond lies the modern city of Qingdao with its wide boulevards and 21st century architecture. Famed for its bathing beaches, its importance will surely increase as the 2008 Olympics approach, for the city



Zhanshan Temple

will host the Games' sailing events.

Visitors should not overlook the international fame that the Germans inadvertently gave Qingdao. Tsingtao Beer, using the early romanized form of the city's name, is a brand name for the city. In restored original buildings, the brewery has recently introduced an audio-visual introduction to the history of this famous brew. The inspection finishes, appropriately, in the spacious Tsingtao Bar where a range of products can be leisurely sampled.

Getting there: Train No. 2539 leaves Beijing Railway Station daily at 5:11 pm and arrives at Qingdao at 7:26 am the next morning. Hard sleeper costs under 200 yuan and the trip takes 14 hours.

Alternatively, take train T25 from Beijing Railway Station at 10:10 pm and arrives at 7:57 am the next morning. Hard sleeper costs 200 yuan and soft sleeper costs 300. The trip takea a little under 10 hours.

Photos By Bruce Connolly